BASIC BELIEFS

H. MALDWYN HUGHES

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An Introduction to Christian Doctrine

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PREFACE

In the following pages I have endeavored to present an outline of evangelical theology.

The task has not been easy. The need for compression and simplicity, and for mediation between the old and the new, in a restricted space, has imposed obvious limitations.

There is a widespread impression that recent developments of knowledge have made evangelical doctrines untenable. I cherish the hope that those who read these pages will find that whatever changes of form and statement may have been necessitated, the foundation truths of evangelical theology remain unshaken.

Readers should have a Bible at hand, and should look up the passages to which reference is made.

My grateful thanks are due to my friend, the Rev. Dr. J. S. Ladd Thomas, who has kindly compiled the bibliography.

September, 1929. H. M. H.

CHAPTER I

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

THEOLOGY is concerned with the knowledge of God. How do we know him or anything about him? But it may be said that there is a prior question—How do we know that there is a God? Philosophers have developed proofs by which they have sought to establish that there is a God. It has been held that—

(1) Because we have an idea of a Perfect Being (that is, God) therefore that Being exists.

(2) Everything must have a cause sufficient to account for it. Therefore the universe must have a sufficient cause, and this can only be found in God.

(3) As there are traces of order and design in the world there must be an infinite Designer, that is, God.

(4) Man has never been able to rid himself of the inward imperative "I ought." This is satisfactorily accounted for only if there be a God of whose mind and will it is the expression.

These "Proofs" have been subjected to searching criticism, and it must be admitted that none of them constitutes a proof in Euclid's sense of the word. What they do, in effect, is

to establish the fact that apart from belief in God it is well-nigh impossible to conceive of the universe in which we live as rational and moral. Reason cannot conclusively prove the existence of God, but it can confirm the findings of faith and can bear witness that they are reasonable. Faith does not say, "God is, therefore I will strive to know him," but "I know God, and live in fellowship with him; therefore he is."

The certainties of the religious life are not born of argument, but of fellowship with God. What happens in actual life is not that men begin with the quest for an intellectual certainty of God, and then endeavor to attain to a knowledge of his nature, but that, first of all, they meet with God in prayer, experience a power which is not their own in times of temptation, and are conscious of a "divinity that shapes our ends"; then they proceed to examine these experiences and to ask themselves whether they are self-deluded, or are really in communion with a God who actually exists. And this should be the order of theology, if it is to be true to the facts of the religious life. We start, then, with the knowledge of God. How is it attained? Theology's answer is by *Revelation* and *Inspiration*. God can only be known as he makes himself known. Man can only

think God's thoughts, as God himself kindles them within him.

I. Revelation and Inspiration

Revelation is God's impartation of the knowledge of himself; inspiration is the divine quickening of man's faculties, so as to enable him to apprehend and communicate this knowledge. God has never left himself without witness. Through the whole course of history we can trace the working of "a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness," and at certain epochs (for example, in the prophets and in the coming of Christianity) there have been special manifestations of God, which have provided starting-points for religious thought and life. God has also spoken to all sorts of individuals in response to prayer and quest for the truth. He has quickened their faculties, widened their moral and spiritual horizon, and given them an enlarged knowledge of himself, a knowledge which is their own, because it is not simply derived from the instruction of others, but has been verified in their own experience. This divine quickening of our faculties whereby we are enabled to apprehend and to communicate new knowledge of divine things is what we call inspiration. The chief advances in the knowledge of God have come

through outstanding personalities. The prophetic souls who outstrip their fellows in the thirst for God and in intimacy of fellowship with him are the pioneers who lead the way. The greatest advance of all has come through Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son, and through those inspired men who have interpreted him to us.

We now proceed to consider revelation in its chief historic forms.

II. The Non-Christian Religions as Revelation

Wherever there is religion we find some degree of revelation. Modern study has led to a fuller appreciation of elements of value in non-Christian faiths. The study of their sacred writings has discovered grains of gold in the clay. But it is easy to exaggerate the number of the grains of gold. In reality they are comparatively few. The value of a religion is not to be estimated simply by isolated passages in its Scriptures which bear marks of inspiration, but by its conception of God and by its general influence over character and life. There is wide agreement to-day that the non-Christian religions cannot be dismissed as wholly "false," since with much error there are mingled genuine revelations of God. These

revelations are, however, for the most part occasional and unrelated to each other, whereas the revelations recorded in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures constitute a unity, and are, on the whole, progressive.

III. The Christian Revelation

The Christian holds that revelation reached its climax in Jesus Christ. All other revelations (more especially that of the Old Testament) were preparatory to him. He is the "Word of God" (John 1. 1), the revelation and embodiment of the Divine Thought. God is revealed not only in the record of the words and works of Jesus, but in his Personality.

The Christian knows God through Christ, and he tests every statement concerning God by this standard. The task of Christian theology is to make explicit that which is implied in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Christianity establishes revelation on concrete historical ground, and unveils God in the fact and acts of a divine-human Personality, as well as in the outworkings of history and in the inner experiences of the church and of individuals.

IV. The Bible

The Bible is the record of the Christian revelation. In the Old Testament we see the

gradual development of that revelation which was directly preparatory to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which is contained and expounded in the New Testament. The Bible establishes its supremacy and proves its uniqueness by its own appeal to the soul of man and by the response which it awakens. The dominating thought which runs through the whole of it is that of the redemption of the soul. The Bible is the book of redemptive revelation.

It is important to keep clearly in mind the distinction between *revelation* and the *record* of revelation. The revelation is greater than its written record as the spirit transcends the letter. The Christian revelation lives and grows and is not finally fixed in any writings. The Word of God which has been revealed "by divers portions and in divers manners" is still expressing itself in many different forms. We shall be saved from excessive literalism in our interpretation of the Scriptures if we remember that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

V. The Canon

The Bible consists of a collection of books which religious faith has marked off from all other literature and to which it has attached a special authority. These books are said to

constitute the canon (= rule) because they are accepted as our supreme rule of faith and practice. The canon consists of two parts—the Old Testament and the New. Both were formed gradually by the Jewish and Christian Churches respectively. The following points should be noted:

(1) Neither canon is the result of conscious purpose to produce one, either on the part of individuals, or of communities. Neither Old Testament nor New Testament writers wrote with the expectation that their writings would be treated as canonical.

(2) Both canons were formed as the result of a gradual process in which the general religious consciousness played a determining part. In neither case were the limits of the canon determined by a divine command, or by the decree of a Council, but by the gradual agreement of religious people. This agreement was, of course, not reached without reflection: for example, it was a weighty consideration in the case of the Old Testament if a book was supposed to come from the hand of some famous person such as Solomon or David, and in the case of the New Testament if a book was held to be written by an apostle. Councils when they pronounced on the question did not do so with a view so much to imposing

agreement as to registering an agreement which had been already widely reached.

The canon of the *Old Testament* was formed in three stages.

1. *The Law.* The Pentateuch (the first five books). This was recognized as canonical probably about 397 B.C.

2. *Prophecy and History.* Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor Prophets. This section probably gained canonical authority by the end of the second century B.C., though we know of no official act of canonization.

3. *The Hagiographa* (Holy Writing). Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. The rabbis seem to have regarded this section of the canon as closed about 100 A.D., although probably it was closed in the popular mind much earlier.

Three stages have been traced in the growth of the *New Testament* canon.

(1) 70–170 A.D. The period of the separate circulation and gradual collection of the sacred writings.

(2) 170–303 A.D. The period which completes the history of their separation from the mass of ecclesiastical literature.

(3) 303–397 A.D. The period which comprises

the formal ratification of the current belief by the authority of councils.

The Third Council of Carthage, 397 A.D., ratified the New Testament canon as it at present stands.

VI. The Inspiration of the Bible

What is the quality which the books of the Bible possess, which has caused them to be set in a class apart? The answer is, Inspiration. The word is commonly used rather loosely, but it is intended to convey two ideas. First, the Bible is a record of revelation, and, secondly, the writers produced the record under divine guidance and constraint. The Scriptures unfold the experience of a people that was set apart and trained to receive a larger revelation than was given to the mass of mankind. They contain the inspired intuitions and utterances of prophet, saint, and seer, and show us how, stage by stage, Israel advanced in the knowledge of God. Above all, they contain the record of the culmination of the long process of revelation in Jesus Christ and testify to his transforming influence in the thought and life of his early followers.

The Bible is not the outcome merely of travail of intellect. It is an *inspired* book.

Experience has shown that it is impossible

to frame a rigid definition of the term "Inspiration" as applied to the Scriptures. The great Councils of the church have never attempted the task. It is enough to state in general terms that the writers wrote under divine constraint and guidance. They worked on materials of a unique character and were endowed with the special illumination and insight and power of expression necessary for the task in hand. They were not mechanical instruments who wrote automatically at the dictates of the Spirit. Mechanical and verbal theories of inspiration are rejected almost unanimously to-day, because they do not harmonize with the facts, such as the peculiarities of style of individual writers, differences of statement by different writers concerning the same facts, and divergent accounts of the same words and incidents (for example, the differences in the Gospels). Indeed, even if the verbal inspiration of the original Scriptures were admitted, its value would be greatly impaired if the authority of every translation were not also assured by the same guarantee. The characteristic of biblical inspiration is not the suspension of the human faculties, but their quickening and direction by the indwelling Spirit of God. This does not, of course, involve immunity from all error. The

record is rarely or never a perfectly adequate vehicle of revelation. It is not to be expected that inspiration for moral and religious purposes should confer scientific or philosophic or historical infallibility. And even in the religious sphere, because man is a personality and not a machine, the personal factors cannot be eliminated from the thoughts and minds of inspired speakers and writers.

VII. Proofs of the Inspiration of the Bible

The following considerations supply cumulative evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

1. When the Christian Scriptures are compared with those of the non-Christian religions, the transcendent inspiration of the former is immediately manifest.

The former surpass the latter immeasurably both in the positive contents of their moral and spiritual revelation and in their freedom from base conceptions.

2. Coleridge expressed the general experience of Christian men when he wrote, "In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all books put together, and the words of the Bible find me at a greater depths of my being."

3. Students of the Bible are impressed with its unity of spirit and purpose. Although consisting of books written in very different ages, by men of varied endowments and standpoints, they nevertheless constitute one Book. Deeper than all differences is the underlying movement toward a Redeemer and redemption. "The New Testament is implicit in the Old; the Old is explicit in the New."

4. It is almost startling to find how largely we are dependent on the Bible for our knowledge of God. If this generation has a worthier conception of God than its predecessors, it is largely because it is better equipped for the interpretation of the Bible. The Bible is influencing all the religions of the world and is transfiguring and transforming their ideas of God.

5. The inspiration of the Bible is attested by its influence on the lives of individuals and nations, and by its power to satisfy man's many-sided needs. It has been translated into nearly six hundred tongues, and wherever it is read and obeyed it revolutionizes thought and life and lifts them to higher levels.

VIII. Revelation is Progressive

The Bible is the record of an ever-growing and widening revelation. The Old Testament

is the record of a progressive and preparatory revelation of God to Israel, of the gradual spiritualization of the people's conception of him, and of the slow ennobling of their moral standards and ideals. This does not mean that all great ideas came strictly in the order of time. The development was *in the main* progressive, but some great ideas emerged at an early stage. When the progressive character of the revelation is remembered, many of the "moral difficulties" of the Old Testament lose their force. We feel ourselves no longer under an obligation to defend crude conceptions of God, or to justify actions which an immature religious knowledge attributed to him. We learn to distinguish between God and man's thought of God at different stages of his growth, and we cease to charge God with that which is to be attributed to the undeveloped ideas of man. We do not realize the full grandeur of the Bible until we view it as a progressive revelation of God, advancing resistlessly in the face of every obstacle to its triumphant culmination in Jesus Christ.

IX. Degrees of Inspiration

If the view of inspiration and revelation here set forth be true, it will be seen that all parts of the Bible are not equally inspired.

No one would attribute the same measure of inspiration to Esther or the Song of Songs as to the Gospel according to John. These considerations, together with those advanced in paragraph VIII, show how misleading it is to build up systems of doctrine by choosing texts indiscriminately from all parts of the Bible and attributing to them all the same value.

X. The Higher or Literary Criticism

By the "higher criticism" is meant the investigation of the questions which relate to the authorship, date, place of origin, integrity, and historical trustworthiness of the books of the Bible. It is very important to notice that the word "criticism" does not carry here the meaning of hostile judgment; it is used in its original meaning of impartial judgment or decision according to the facts. The word "higher" conveys no suggestion of superiority. Criticism in its earliest stage took the form of criticism of the documents. When at a more advanced stage it entered upon the inner study of Scripture, it called itself "higher" in order to distinguish itself from the criticism of the documents as a "lower" or preparatory form of study. For the sake of clearness a few illustrations may be given. In some cases criticism has gone behind the books as we

have them to-day and claims to have discovered the documentary sources out of which they were composed (for example, in the case of the Pentateuch in the Old Testament, and the synoptic Gospels in the New Testament). Sometimes points of similarity are noted between a biblical narrative and one in extra-biblical literature, and the question of the possible dependence of one on the other is investigated (for example, critics have compared the Genesis creation-story with the Babylonian epics of creation). Again, books are examined with a view to deducing whether they are a unity or have more than one author (for example, Isaiah and the Psalms) or have been subjected to interpolation at any point. They are investigated with a view to estimating the evidence in support of their alleged authorship, and in order to ascertain as nearly as possible the order and the circumstances in which they were written (as in the case of the Prophets and the Epistles of Paul). An effort may be made to determine their historical trustworthiness, by comparison with other historical sources (non-biblical writers, monuments, and papyri) and with other books of the Bible (for example, the books of Chronicles are compared with the books of Kings, and John's Gospel with the Synoptics).

This and kindred methods of study are legitimate, if reverently pursued, unless we make for the Bible the impossible claim that it be exempt from all literary and historical scrutiny. The authority of the Bible rests on wider and deeper foundations, when it is seen to emerge from this process of criticism unimpaired in its value as a revelation of God. The Bible, which is the Word of Truth, has nothing to fear from the discovery of the truth about itself.

But it is necessary to sound a caution against the abuse of the rights of criticism.

1. Some critics have approached the Bible with a bias against the supernatural. They dismiss as legend or myth everything which transcends the limits of their thought or experience. It need hardly be said that they are as unscientific as are the advocates of verbal inspiration.

2. The critic of the Scriptures is not adequately equipped for his task unless he has some understanding of and sympathy with religious experience. How can a scholar do justice to the writings of the prophets unless he himself has some experience of fellowship with God? Who can hope to make a just estimate of Paul, who has not himself a living experience of Jesus Christ?

XI. The Use of the Bible in Theology

The Scriptures are the main source of Christian doctrine for the reasons which have been given. But the theologian must be careful to make a right use of the sources. He must not treat the whole Bible as a single source, all the different parts of which are of equal value and authority. The Bible is not an armory of proof-texts for the use of theologians. It is not to be regarded as a statute-book, but as a vehicle of spirit and life. The following considerations should be borne in mind:

1. In using the books of the Bible for theological purposes we must take account of their chronology. We must remember the progressive character of revelation.

2. In formulating *Christian* theology we must recognize the primacy of the *New Testament*. The whole biblical revelation is to be interpreted in the light of Christ.

3. The Bible must not be treated as embodying a closed system of truth. The canon is rightly closed, but later developments which derive from New Testament teaching and draw out its implications are legitimate. Our Lord himself stated that his revelation was incomplete and would be continued by the living Spirit of Truth (John 16. 12f.).

CHAPTER II

JESUS CHRIST

JESUS CHRIST is central in Christian theology. Who and what was he? This is a question around which much controversy has raged. There is something about his personality which baffles us. Every attempt to interpret him in purely human terms has failed. That he lived in history in the first century of our era is certain. Our knowledge of him is derived almost entirely from the New Testament and especially from the synoptic Gospels. It should be added, however, that the faith in him as Lord, to which the New Testament bears witness, is confirmed by the experience of the church.

A. THE WITNESS OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

(*a*) *Jesus Christ was human.* The close and exact study which has been devoted to the synoptic Gospels of recent years has confirmed beyond all possibility of doubt the traditional belief of the church in the reality of the humanity of Jesus. He was a man who shared our human limitations in all respects with the important exception that

he was free from sin. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is true to the witness of the Gospels when he says, "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same" (2. 14). "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (4. 15).

(*b*) *Jesus Christ was more than human.* When we have sought to explain Jesus Christ in terms of the most perfect humanity, there yet remain elements in his person which are left unexplained and which we are bound to characterize as "more than human." Among them are the following:

1. *Jesus' Relation to the Kingdom of God.* The kingdom which he proclaimed is not merely an ideal human order, it is the kingdom of *God*—to be established by God and to be ruled by God. Anyone who claims to be the Mediator of this kingdom must also claim to stand in a unique relation to God. Does Jesus claim to be the Mediator of the kingdom? He says that his works are a proof that the kingdom of God has arrived. "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you" (Matt. 12. 28). So closely is

he identified with the Kingdom that the expressions "for my sake" and "for the kingdom of God's sake" have the same significance, and are used interchangeably. Where Mark reads "for my sake, and for the gospel's sake" (10.29), Luke reads "for the kingdom of God's sake" (18. 29).

The position which he conceived himself as holding in the Father's purpose is further illustrated by the following passages: He says to John the Baptist, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me" (Matt 11. 6). He opposes his "I say unto you" against some of the commandments of the Old Testament (Matt. 5. 44). He asserts that the position taken toward him is decisive for all eternity: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10. 33). He demands that all men shall leave their kindred for his sake (Matt. 10. 37f.). He claims that he has power to forgive sins (Mark 2. 10). He demands faith in himself (Mark 5. 34), and he says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away" (Mark 13. 31). He says that he will be the Agent in the final judgment of men (Matt. 25. 31ff.).

2. *The Filial Consciousness of Jesus.* Jesus conceived of himself as standing in a filial

relationship to God, and that not in the sense that all men are sons of God, but in a unique sense. The words spoken at the baptism and the transfiguration, "Thou art my beloved Son" (Luke 3. 22), and "This is my Son, my chosen" (Luke 9. 35), reflect the inner consciousness of Jesus. Whatever their exact meaning may be, they clearly imply that Jesus was conscious of standing in a special filial relation to God. This conviction also finds expression in the words "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me" (Matt. 11. 27f.).

It may be asked, Why attach so much importance to the witness of Jesus to himself? We do not usually attach much value to the estimate which men place on themselves. The answer is twofold. First, the general impression of sanity produced by Jesus, and his moral influence on history are not compatible with mental disorder. Second, there is no claim which he makes for himself which is not attested by the evangelists. They all bear witness that his disciples believed him when he spoke of the unique relation in which he stood to God.

3. *The Sinlessness of Jesus.* Sinlessness is a negative term, which denotes freedom from sin. But it is not so that it is applied to Jesus Christ. He was not merely free from sin; he had within himself fullness of moral perfection. That is a quality unparalleled by any other member of our race in human history, and cannot be explained merely in terms of human perfection. "It is vain to speak of him simply as different from others in degree; the difference is one of type. It is a new and lonely type of spiritual consciousness, an unshared relation of identity with the Father. Divinity is here the source and basis of perfect manhood."

4. *The Resurrection of Jesus.* The fact that Jesus rose from the dead proves him to have been outside of and above the ordinary limits of our humanity. The resurrection was the divine vindication of Him who seemed to have been discredited on Calvary. Indeed, the early disciples were so convinced that Jesus was not limited by purely human conditions that to them his resurrection seemed inevitable. "It was not possible that he should be holden of it [death]" (Acts 2. 24).

B. The Witness of the Fourth Gospel

Most scholars do not attach the same degree

of authority to this Gospel as to the synoptic Gospels, because they hold that it is an interpretation of the words of Jesus rather than a literal record of them. But even so, we cannot afford to undervalue the evidence of one who had so manifestly the mind of Christ. In this Gospel the idea of eternal life usually takes the place of that of the kingdom. The supreme Mediator of eternal life is Jesus Christ (17. 3). "He that believeth hath eternal life" (6. 47; see also 5. 24). Our Lord's witness to his filial consciousness, which we have already found in the synoptic Gospels, has even clearer testimony borne to it in the fourth Gospel. Jesus is the Son (5. 19), and he is pre-existent (8. 58). He and his Father are one (10. 30). He knows God, because he is from God and is sent by him (7. 29). He knows whence he comes and whither he goes (8. 14). The relation in which he stands to God is thus expressed, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing; for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth. . . . For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto

the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father . . . For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself: and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man" (5. 19-27).

Jesus, therefore, conceives of himself as the supreme Mediator of God to man. He is absolutely central to the Christian message. He is the Light of the world (8. 12). He is the Way, the Truth, the Life (14. 6). He is the Bread of Life (6. 35), the Resurrection and the Life (11. 25). His death is the condemnation of the world and strikes a death-blow at the power of evil (12. 31). All judgment is committed to him (5. 22). There is no greater beatitude for the disciple than to be with Christ (14. 3; 17. 24).

When we consider all this evidence drawn from the Gospels we ask how are we to interpret a Personality who bore to himself, and to whom the evangelists bore, such a witness as this. Obviously, he cannot be confined within the bounds of our humanity, real as was his participation in our human nature and life. We are constrained to say that he was divine, in the sense that God was incarnate in him.

C. The Witness of the Early Church

To the earliest Christian community, Jesus Christ was an object of faith and worship. History does not know of any primitive community which saw in him merely a Teacher and Example. From the very beginning the term Lord is applied to Jesus (Acts 1. 21)—the term which is used for the divine name in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Stephen died saying "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7. 59). It is implied throughout Acts that Christians prayed to Christ (9. 14, 21; 22. 16). From this it is clear that the early Christians conceived of Jesus Christ as being of the nature of God.

D. The Witness of Paul

Paul brought out clearly the identity of the Jesus of history with the heavenly Christ. He testifies that Jesus Christ is to Christians in their inner life what only God can be. He is "Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom. 14. 9). He is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1. 15; 2 Cor. 4. 4). "Being in the form of God, [he] counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2. 6f.) The apostle goes further and teaches that

Christ's functions extend to the whole universe. He is associated with the Father in the work of creation. "There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things" (1 Cor. 8. 6). "In him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth . . . all things have been created through him and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist" (Col. 1. 16f.). He is to judge the world. "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5. 10). It is the purpose of God "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Eph. 1. 10).

By setting forth Christ as standing in so essential a relation to God Paul saved the early Christians from regarding Jesus as another god or demigod more or less like the pagan gods.

The same witness is borne by the Epistle to the Hebrews and First Peter. There is no need to set it forth in detail here, but reference may be made to the following passages: Heb. 1. 3, 6; 9. 26; 13. 8; 1 Pet. 1. 11, 20.

E. The Johannine Witness

The fourth Gospel, the First Epistle of

John and the Apocalypse are generally held to have come from the same hand, or at any rate from the same circle. According to the *fourth Gospel*, Jesus Christ is the Word, who has been eternally with God; indeed, he is God (1. 1). He was Agent in creation, and from the beginning he has been the life and light of men. "The Word became flesh" (1. 1-15). Hereafter the author drops the term "Word" and speaks of the "Son." Jesus Christ is "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (1. 18). Though in the flesh and on earth, he has not abandoned his eternal relationship to the Father. In the *First Epistle of John* too Jesus Christ is described as the Word of Life which was from the beginning, and has been manifested unto men—the Word of Life who is the Son of the Father (1. 1-4).

In the *Apocalypse* Christ is described as "the Alpha and Omega" (22. 13), the same terms being applied to God in 1. 8 and 21. 6. He is the "Lamb" who shares God's throne (22. 1). He is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19. 6).

F. Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ

The earliest Christians were not conscious

of any contradiction between the humanity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. They believed in the reality of his manhood, and they also thought of him as a divine Being who had descended into humanity. But the question was bound to arise—How could the divine and the human thus unite in one personality? It is this which constitutes the great problem of the person of Christ. At a very early date the following solutions were offered: Some held that the body of Jesus was a phantom. The Son of God did not really come in the flesh; he only appeared to do so (cf. 2 John 7). Others said that Jesus was a man who was adopted as Son of God when the Spirit descended on him at his baptism. Others again said that Christ was a heavenly emanation, who descended on Jesus at his baptism, fitted him for his Messianic vocation, and left him before his crucifixion, since the heavenly Christ could not suffer. But these solutions were all held to be heretical by the church.

There was a natural anxiety to preserve the divine unity, which seemed to be threatened by the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Toward the beginning of the third century there were those who taught that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are but different aspects

or manifestations of the one God. Thus it was the Father who suffered on the cross. This teaching also was declared heretical. The greatest contribution to the development of the doctrine of the person of Christ, which the church ultimately adopted, was made by *Origen* (186–254 A. D.), who taught the *eternal generation of the Son.* In the early years of the third century *Arius* propounded a theory which deeply agitated the church for some years. He held that Christ was the Son, but he had a beginning before all time and was the Mediator of creation. He was the Word, created by God, who took the place of the human soul in Jesus. Jesus Christ was, therefore, neither God nor man, but a demigod. The answer of the church, led by *Athanasius* (299–373 A. D.), to these and other speculations is embodied in the *Nicene Creed* (325 A. D.). Jesus Christ is declared to be "the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven," etc. This creed does not define the relations of the human to the divine in Jesus Christ, but it carefully defines his deity in terms which

aim at ruling out the Arian and other prevailing heresies.

Attention was afterward turned to the relation of the humanity to the divinity in Jesus Christ. Some of the critics of the Nicene Creed said that it represented Jesus Christ as having two personalities. There was a growing consciousness of the need of showing that there was a real unity in his person. We cannot trace here the course of the discussion, which has even yet not reached a final issue. The church is united, in the main, in declaring (1) the unity of his person. (2) The reality of his human nature. (3) The reality of the "more than human" element in him. The problem of the relation of his divinity to his humanity is still unsolved.

But the faith of the Christian in Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God does not depend on the solution of this speculative problem.

1. It is through this Man, Christ Jesus, that we know God as a living, loving, and redeeming reality. The knowledge of God on which we base our faith and hope has practically all come to us through Jesus Christ. Christian thought hardly distinguishes between Jesus Christ and God. If we know Christ, we know God; if we are in fellowship with Christ, we are in fellowship with God.

2. The highest moral and spiritual values which the mind of man can conceive all derive from Jesus Christ. He is the Revealer of these values, and not only the Revealer but their Fountain and Source. He gives them vitality and clothes them with a power which cannot be gainsaid. And inasmuch as God is the source of all good, the conclusion follows that Jesus Christ is one with God.

3. The person of Christ must be interpreted in the light of his work. Jesus Christ is proved to be divine by his divine works. As Luther said, "Christ is not named Christ because he has two natures. What meaning has that for me? But he bears his lordly and comforting names because of the office and work he has taken on himself." To speak of Jesus Christ as Lord means that "He has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and all misfortunes. The little word 'Lord,' taken in its simplest sense, means as much as Redeemer; that is, he who has led us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness and holds us safe."

These are the transforming realities which constrain the Christian (even while the speculative problem awaits solution) to say, "God of God, Very God of Very God."

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD

THERE is no more important question in the sphere of religion than What is God like? The Christian answer is given in the light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. This implies a study not only of New Testament teaching, but of the teaching of the Old Testament, because the former presupposes a good deal of the latter. The Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus, and his teaching about God is based on what is highest and best in it. But not everything in the Old Testament harmonizes with the Christian doctrine of God. Moreover, we have to take into account the work of the Spirit of Truth in guiding the thought of men through nineteen centuries. Jesus Christ is the supreme touchstone. There is no room in our construction for anything which does not harmonize with the spirit of his teaching.

A. OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING AS TO GOD

We are not concerned here with the various ideas of God which obtain in the Old Testament. There are, of course, some which do not harmonize with the Christian revelation. They

find their place in the history of the development of religious ideas, but they have no permanent value. Our present concern is only with those great and abiding ideas which were taken over into Christianity.

1. *God Is Creator.* (See Gen. 1 and Isa. 45. 6f.)

2. *God Is Personal.* God is the living God. He "is the absolute personality, over against finite personalities, not absorbing personalities in himself, not by his personality excluding personalities beside himself."

3. *God Is One.* The Old Testament tells the story of how Israel, beginning with a tribal Deity, reached the belief in one God, supreme over heaven and earth. The prophets conceived of Jehovah as King of the whole earth. His greatness was such that there was no room for lesser gods. "The Lord is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting king . . . The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens" (Jer. 10. 10f.).

4. *God Is Spirit.* Despite tendencies to think of God after the fashion of a man, the dominant conception of the Old Testament is that of God as spiritual. Unceasing warfare is waged against idolatry (Exod. 20. 4; Deut. 4. 15f.; Isa. 40. 18ff.).

5. The Attributes of God. (1) *Holiness.* At first holiness suggested majesty, augustness, separateness, and remoteness, but gradually God's holiness was more and more identified with his moral excellence. The divine holiness is the characteristic theme of Isaiah's prophecy.

(2) *Righteousness.* The righteousness of God is the consistency of his character as seen in his dealings with Israel and in the moral order of the universe. But the Old Testament writers do not set the divine righteousness and mercy in opposition to each other. God's saving activity, no less than his judgment, is a manifestation of his righteousness.

> "Gracious is the Lord and righteous;
> Yea, our God is merciful" (Psa. 116. 5).

The righteousness of God is the characteristic theme of the prophecy of Amos.

(3) *Grace or Love.* God's motive in all his dealings with Israel is love. "There is no antithesis between righteousness and grace. The exercise of grace, goodness, forgiveness may be called righteousness in God." The divine love is the characteristic theme of the prophecy of Hosea.

(4) *God Is Almighty* (Gen. 17. 1; Job 13. 3; Ezek. 1. 24); *all-knowing* (Psa. 147. 5) and *all-present* (Psa. 139).

B. The New Testament Teaching as to God

The New Testament throughout assumes the Old Testament background outlined above.

1. *The Synoptic Gospels.* Jesus did not proclaim an entirely new doctrine of God. His God is the God of the Old Testament (Matt. 22. 31), especially the God of the prophets. Of course this does not mean that he accepted everything taught about God in the Old Testament. There are many Old Testament ideas which cannot be reconciled with the thought of God as the universal Father. None the less it is true that the movement of revelation in the Old Testament reaches its crown and culmination in Jesus Christ.

The concern of Jesus was not to provide a doctrinal formula concerning God, but to give men a living knowledge of him in his relation to man. He uses the terms of his own day, and each generation must relate the teaching of Jesus to the structure of its own thought.

What was there distinctive and characteristic in the teaching of Jesus concerning God? It may be summed up in his ascription of Fatherhood to God. The great theme of his preaching was the kingdom of God, but it was the Father's kingdom that he proclaimed, and he seldom spoke of God as King. Fatherhood,

as interpreted by him, includes all the highest attributes of Kingship. God is the *Sovereign-Father.* Jesus was not the first to call God Father. He is so described in the Old Testament in relation to Israel. All through the history of his chosen people, he had dealt with them in a Fatherly way. But it is not suggested in the Old Testament that God is (save in the sense of creatorship) the Father of all men. It is true that no passage can be quoted in which Jesus specifically makes the latter statement concerning God. Rather does he speak of God as his own Father and the Father of his disciples. But the universality of God's Fatherhood is implied in all his teaching. He regards God as standing in a Fatherly relation to all men, pouring out his gifts on all alike (Matt. 5. 45). But did he regard all men as sons of God? To answer the question we must note the distinction between the actual and the potential. Even his disciples are regarded as potential rather than actual sons of God. "Love your enemies," he said, "that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5. 44f.).

Man's potential sonship becomes actual when he responds to the love of God. In the parable of the prodigal son the father is father all the time, but the youth in the far country is "no

son of his father" until he comes to himself and responds to his father's love. Then his sonship becomes actual, and he enters into the moral relations and the fellowship of a son. God's Fatherhood is universal, but men become sons insofar as they fulfill the moral and spiritual conditions of sonship.

What is the meaning of the word "Father" in this connection? It has been pointed out that the distinctive New Testament name for God is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This means that the Fatherhood of God is to be interpreted in the light of the Sonship of Jesus. God is such an one as Jesus found him to be in his filial consciousness. To Jesus, God was real. Fellowship with his Father was the very breath of his life. He presents his Father as being willing to enter into the most intimate and beneficent relations with all men. God's purpose of love to the race and his providential care for the children of men are to him an axiom not admitting of question. God is perfectly good. The Father of Jesus has the moral attributes of the God of the prophets, save that, in the thought of Jesus, God's grace seems to outshine all his other attributes. But as with the prophets, so with Jesus, God's love and righteousness cannot be viewed apart from each other.

It is not, however, in his teaching alone that Jesus reveals God. Rather is it in and through his personality. He has an undimmed knowledge of the mind of God. "Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Matt. 11. 27). His will is the reflex of the will of God. We may thus say that *God is like Jesus.* The moral attributes of Jesus are the moral attributes of God, because in all things he did his Father's will. Because Jesus faced the cross in obedience to the will of his Father, it follows that the will to sacrifice is grounded deep in the nature of God.

2. *The Fourth Gospel.* The teaching of Jesus about God as recorded in the fourth Gospel is essentially one with that in the synoptics, but differs in form. "God is a Spirit" (4. 24). No man has seen God (6. 46), but he is manifested in Jesus Christ. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (14. 9). "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also" (14. 7). That is, the fourth Evangelist joins with the synoptists in witnessing that *God is like Jesus.* Here again also God is designated "Father." First of all and uniquely, he is the Father of Jesus Christ, whom he has loved from "the foundation of the world" (17. 24). He is also the Father of those who

love and obey Christ (14. 23; 16. 27). But running through the whole Gospel is the implied idea that he is the Father of all men, for his love is universal. He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (3. 16). Indeed, there are passages in which Jesus speaks of God as "Father" without any qualification (4. 23; 15. 16; 16. 23). But it is not all men who know God as their Father and who live as sons. We *become* sons as we respond to Jesus Christ (8. 31-59). As in the synoptics the Fatherhood of God is to be interpreted in the light of the Sonship of Jesus. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth" (5. 19f.). It is no passive, inactive God who is revealed. He is "the living Father" (6. 57), the fountain of life who "hath life in himself" (5. 26), and who is continually working (5. 17). His righteousness and holiness are but aspects of his love and grace. He is the holy (17. 11) and righteous (17. 25) Father. Because God is righteous and holy the act in which he gives the supreme manifestation of his redemptive love is also "the judgment of this world" and the casting out of "the prince of this world" (12. 31f.).

3. *The Pauline Epistles.* Paul speaks of God as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 1. 3; Eph. 1. 3). The thought runs throughout his Epistles that *God is like Jesus.* God's work is Christ's and Christ's is God's. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5. 19). Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1. 15; 2 Cor. 4. 4). "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God" shines "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4. 6).

The idea of the Fatherhood of God is dominant in Paul's thought. The conception of the family usually takes the place of the synoptic kingdom of God. The two ideas are not as far removed from one another as might appear. Our Lord brought them into connection when he said, "Seek ye first his [that is, the Father's] Kingdom" (Matt. 6. 33). There are passages which may be taken to mean that God's Fatherhood is limited to those who are redeemed by Christ. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children,

then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8. 14-17). But other passages show that Paul believed in the universal Fatherhood of God, for example, "To us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we with him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him" (1 Cor. 8. 6). God the Father is the source and end of all creation, but the Fatherly purposes of God are realized only through the redeemed, those who have entered into the conscious relationship of sons. "I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. 3. 14).

But although God is the universal Father, all men do not know themselves to be his sons, nor do they live in the fellowship of sons. God's Fatherly purpose in Jesus Christ is to bring men into right relations with the Father, and it is through him that we receive the "spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8. 15).

The two attributes of God on which Paul dwells most frequently and emphatically are his *righteousness* and his *grace.* These are in no sense opposite to one another, but are different aspects of that reality which may be called his *holy love.*

When Paul speaks of the righteousness of God, he means that the moral law is deep-grounded in the nature of God and that his disposition and actions are the expressions of it. Righteousness is an aspect of holy love. God's love always aims at the highest good for man and this includes righteousness. The love that disregards the interests of righteousness is neither perfect nor holy, because it sacrifices that which is essential to the highest well-being. There is no conflict between the love and righteousness of God. His love is holy. His righteousness is not merely a legal righteousness. It is directed and controlled by love. For this reason Paul can link together the ideas of the goodness and the severity of God. "Behold then the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11. 22).

The grace of God is the love of God going forth freely to man. The supreme proof of the grace of God is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. "For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many" (Rom. 5. 15).

The grace of God is not simply God's disposition of love to mankind. It is a spiritual energy which operates within those who love

Christ, transforming and strengthening them (1 Cor. 1. 4; 15. 10; 2 Cor. 12. 9; Eph. 3. 7).

"Grace we implore; when billows roll
Grace is the anchor of the soul;
Grace every sickness knows to heal;
Grace can subdue each fond desire
And patience in all pain inspire
Howe'er rebellious nature swell."

But the grace of God does not operate in such a way as to undermine the interests of righteousness. Grace reigns "through righteousness" (Rom. 5. 21).

It is by means of these materials, together with the further knowledge into which the Spirit of Truth has led us during the last nineteen centuries, that we must find an answer to the question, What is God like?

C. Constructive Statement

We must begin by recognizing the limitations of human knowledge. God is not wholly comprehensible by our finite intelligence. It behooves us, therefore, to proceed with reverence, abstaining from too sure a dogmatism. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever" (Deut. 29. 29).

1. *God Is Eternal.* He is without beginning

and without end. We cannot prove that God is eternal. The idea has come to us by revelation. But it is hard to see how any being worthy to be called God could be other than self-existent.

2. *God Is Creator.* The Christian doctrine is that God is absolute Creator, that is, that he created the world out of nothing. He is both Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He "upholds all things by the word of his power," and he is the ultimate originating cause of all that is.

Some of the Christian Fathers held, as do some modern thinkers, that the universe had no beginning in time, but that God is eternally creative. This, of course, does not mean that any particular system in the universe is eternal, or that matter is necessarily eternal, but that because God's inmost nature is love, there cannot have been a time when his activity was not creative.

Modern science regards creation not as a finished act, but as a process which is still going on. The creation is moving to the "one far-off divine event" under the control and guidance of Him who brought it into being.

3. *God Is Spirit.* It is not easy to define "Spirit." The word suggests that which is not material. But that is a negative definition.

We come nearest to its positive meaning when we infer that, because God is Spirit, he enters into fellowship with us. "Spirit with spirit can meet." Because we think of him as Spirit, we can think of him as everywhere and can speak of his *omnipresence.* This is not to be understood in the sense of extension in space. It does not mean that his essence fills the whole creation, but that God is accessible to us everywhere. He "can do everywhere all that he can do anywhere. All that he is is everywhere available for creation at all time."

In the same way God is *omniscient.* The perfect mind cannot be omnipresent without knowing all.

4. *God Is Personal.* Personal life is the highest kind of life which we know or can conceive. It implies intelligence, feeling, and will; self-consciousness and self-determination. This does not mean that God is personal in exactly the same sense as we are. Human personality is but a faint copy of the divine Personality. When we speak of God as personal, we mean that he lives, thinks, feels, wills, and that fellowship is the spontaneous expression of his nature.

5. *God Is Our Father.* Fatherhood involves creatorship, sovereignty, redemption, and providence. The term is to be interpreted in the

light of what Jesus found and showed God to be. For purposes of convenience we speak of God under the masculine form, but in him all the highest human qualities whether of man or of woman find perfect embodiment. When, then, we speak of the Fatherhood of God, the expression contains also the idea of the Motherhood of God. God's disposition to us is that of fatherhood and motherhood at their highest and best—and infinitely more.

God's Fatherhood implies sovereignty. To think of God as finite in power is self-contradictory. Hence theology speaks of the *omnipotence of God.* This does not mean that God can do every conceivable thing, but that he is able to do all things that he wills to do. He is able to do all things which are in harmony with his holy love. He is the Omnipotent Father.

Fatherhood also implies *Providence.* Christianity teaches that God cares for us (Matt. 10. 29f.; 1 Pet. 5. 7). It is often difficult for the individual to realize this, because he seems at the mercy of circumstances. It may be easier to trace the hand of God in the long processes of history than in individual experience. The Christian doctrine of providence was well stated by Paul: "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good"

(Rom. 8. 28). Until we love God as a child loves his father, and until we interpret aright the meaning of the "good," we have not the insight to discern the providential ways of God in our lives.

6. *God Is Transcendent and Immanent.* By the *transcendence* of God we mean that God is other than the world. We say of a person that he transcends his body and his surroundings. In a similar way God transcends—is other than—the world. By the *immanence* of God we mean the personal indwelling of God in the world and in men. We mean that God who is Spirit is accessible to us at all times and in all places, holds inward fellowship with us and reveals his power and glory through the world of nature which he sustains. The God to whom nature leads us is not impersonal Force, but creative Personality.

7. *The Attributes of God.* By the attributes of God we mean those aspects of his nature which have been revealed to us, and which we, in a measure, apprehend. The moral attributes of God are all summed up in Holy Love. This idea includes both *goodness* and *wisdom*, for all the highest ideals find their embodiment in holy love. Wisdom, too, is implied in love, for love is not perfect unless it is wise. Love is a quality which defies

exact definition. It is because God is love that he created free spirits for fellowship with himself. Love includes grace, which is more than a disposition of good will; it is a divine energy operative for our redemption. Love implies tenderness, mercy, compassion, and even, in some sense, capacity for suffering.

God's love is holy. The idea of love must be freed from every human association which debases it. Because God's love is holy, it seeks the highest well-being of its object. It cannot therefore make light of sin or forgive easily. To gloss over sin would be to fail in love. For this reason the conception of the *wrath* of God is not inconsistent with that of his love. Because of its human associations, the word is not entirely fitting, but it is the best available to express the idea. Because God is Holy Love, his nature spontaneously reacts against sin. Both the goodness and the severity of God have their source in his holy love.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF MAN

It will be convenient to consider first man apart from sin. Sin has entered the world as an alien immigrant, and has marred God's purpose; but let us first consider how God has constituted man. We shall defer the discussion of sin to the next chapter.

A. The Old Testament

1. *The Origin of Man.* There are two accounts of the creation of man in the Old Testament (Gen. 1. 1 to 2. 3 and Gen. 2. 4 to 3. 24). The first narrative describes an ascending order of creation which culminates in man. The second narrative describes man as being created as the first of all living beings. In each case man is represented as supreme over the rest of creation. In the first narrative it is stated that man was made "in the image of God" (1. 27) and the reference is primarily to man's moral and spiritual capacity. In the second narrative it is said that one of the constituents of man's nature is the breath of God. "And . . . God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a

living soul" (2. 7). This narrative represents God as being on intimate terms with man (3. 8). The great thought which underlies both narratives is that man was so constituted as to be *capable of fellowship with God.*

The Bible does not claim to be a textbook of *science,* and we naturally turn to science to see what it has to say as to the origin of man.

The answer is that man has emerged from lower forms of life, that he is the crown of a long and slow process of evolution. The wide acceptance of this theory is mainly due to the work of Charles Darwin. His deductions about the method of evolution no longer command the unqualified assent of scientists. The great principle which he affirmed—of continuous change from form to form of life, from the most rudimentary beginnings to man with his highly organized intellectual and social life—remains and seems to be receiving continuous confirmation.

The theory of evolution in no wise discredits the biblical narratives, whose lofty inspiration is especially evident when they are compared with the stories of other nations and religions. The theory of evolution does not dispense with the need for the Creator. All it does is to suggest the *method* whereby the Creator brought this wonderful world into existence,

and, above all, man, who (according to the theory of evolution no less than the book of Genesis) is the crown of all created things. The glory of God's handiwork is in no wise diminished if it was accomplished by a process rather than by one creative act. Because the evolution theory teaches that man has an animal ancestry it does not thereby reduce man to the level of the beasts. It is true that it is not easy to explain the emergence of man's higher moral and spiritual capacities on the evolution hypothesis; but if the creative Spirit of God was active in the evolutionary process, it might without any straining of the words be said that "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life"—spiritual as well as physical life.

2. *The Constitution of Man.* Man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1. 26f.); that is, he was endowed with moral and spiritual capacities, made capable of fellowship with God and of growth into the likeness of God (Psa. 17. 15). It was out of their experience of fellowship with God that the people of Israel attained the idea that man is of such worth that he is destined for immortality. Clear references to a blessed life beyond the grave are but few in the Old Testament, and such expressions belong to the later stages of the history of the people. But

when they occur they are due to the experience which resulted from the fact that man was made for fellowship with God. Thus the Old Testament opens the way for the great conception that the being created out of the dust of the ground and the breath of the Almighty is of such worth that he is capable of a fellowship with God which even death cannot destroy.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory" (Psa. 73. 24).

B. The New Testament

The Christian doctrine of man springs directly out of the Christian doctrine of God. As the New Testament gives us a nobler and truer conception of God than the Old Testament, so it gives us a nobler and truer conception of the image of God. For the Old Testament terms "God" and "the image of God," the New Testament substitutes the words "Father" and "Son" or "child." Man is to be interpreted in the light of the fact that he is potentially a child of God. The incarnation of the Son of God is itself a declaration of the worth which God attaches to man. It is a declaration that human nature, despite

its corruption by sin, is worth redeeming and is capable of being redeemed. Sin and its effects will be discussed in the next chapter, but it is worth noting here that the New Testament teaches that the divine light in man has never been wholly quenched by sin. There is a "light which lighteth every man" (John 1, 9).

1. *Body, Soul and Spirit.* (1) *The Body.* The New Testament does not reveal the tendency which was present in Greek thought to disparage the body. It does not yield support either to the doctrine that sin has its seat in the body, or to that of the body as the prison-house of the soul. The very fact that the eternal Son of God took a human body would seem to prove that the body is not evil in itself. Moreover, our Lord always treated the body as an integral part of human nature. He ministered to the bodily needs of men as well as to their spiritual needs. He fed the hungry and healed the sick. He made ministry to the body a test of discipleship (Matt. 25. 35, 42). He himself was no ascetic. "The Son of man came eating and drinking" (Matt. 11. 19). But this is not to say that Jesus did not recognize the distinction between soul and body. On the contrary, he makes it clear

that the body is the lower part of a man and the soul the higher.

Paul too takes an exalted view of the body. He says, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? . . . glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Cor. 6. 19f.). "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12. 1). "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5. 23). Paul also looks on the body as representing the lower side of our human nature. While not the seat of sin, it is the instrument of sin. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof; neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness" (Rom. 6. 12f.). "I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7. 23). The body needs to be redeemed (Rom. 8. 22). The body is an integral part of human nature—but not this present body of flesh. Paul says,

"If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15. 44).

The spiritual body is the product of the new life in Christ and is the counterpart of our present material body; it is conceived to be the outcome of the spiritual life "sown" in the corruption, dishonor and weakness of man's present life (1 Cor. 15. 42f.; 2 Cor. 5. 1-5; cf. Gal. 6. 7f.); it is the result of the gradual transformation of the Christian into the image of "the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3. 18). The resurrection body is definitely ascribed to the indwelling spirit. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8. 11).

It is in order to conserve this truth that the church has clung so tenaciously to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

It is important to note Paul's use of the word "flesh." He draws a contrast between *flesh* and *spirit* (Rom. 8. 4-13; Gal. 5. 16f.). "The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom. 8. 6f.). "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife,

jealousies, wraths, factions, diversions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like" (Gal. 5. 19-21). It has been contended that this means that the flesh is evil in itself, and that therefore sin originates in the flesh. But it is now generally agreed that this is not the apostle's meaning. Only five of the works of the flesh, described in *Galatians*, are in the strict meaning of the word "sensuous," while it is clear that enmity, jealousies, wraths, heresies cannot be so described. Paul's aim seems to be not to show that sin originated *from* the flesh, but that sin is powerful *in* the flesh. The body is the part of human nature most open to attack by sin. But to admit that the impulses and appetites of the flesh are often the occasion of sin is not to say that the flesh is sinful in itself. Those who walk in the Spirit can make the flesh the servant of the spirit.

(2) *Soul and Spirit.* It is not easy to distinguish clearly between the use of these two terms in the New Testament. Sometimes they are synonymous. It seems best to regard soul and spirit together as representing the higher side of man's nature and spirit as having special reference to the higher nature as redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

2. *The Unity of the Race.* We have seen how man is constituted, but each individual is not to be regarded as ultimately a self-dependent unit. The race is a unity, and that not merely in a physical sense, but with a deeper meaning. "None of us liveth to himself" (Rom. 14. 7). We depend on one another for the development of our separate personalities. Our fundamental mental and even moral conceptions have been reached through the intercourse of individuals with one another. There are many members, but one body. "And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12. 21f.). We find ourselves in the service of one another. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10. 39). The human race is one family whose Father is God. Each man realizes himself as he fulfills his obligations to the family. Personality is made perfect in love.

Is man free? This is a question around which much controversy has raged through the history of thought. Even yet, philosophers are not unanimous as to the answer, though the trend of belief is quite definitely toward the affirmative, that man is free, subject to

certain limitations. Most ordinary men who have never troubled themselves with philosophy would agree with Doctor Johnson, who said to Boswell, "Sir, we *know* our will is free, and there's an end of it."

The doctrine of the freedom of the will has been attacked from three directions. (1) It is said that, as man is a part of nature which is governed by unchanging laws, he must himself be the subject of those laws. In a universe which seems to be governed by rigid necessity in all its parts, there is no room (it is said) for such a changeful element as free will. (2) It is held that a man's conduct is the inevitable outcome of his character, which in its turn is influenced by his conduct. Man begins by acting according to the disposition with which his heredity and environment have endowed him. Such actions confirm his disposition. All his actions therefore (it is held) are the inevitable expression of what he is himself. They were all latent in the initial germ of his personality. Character issues in conduct, and conduct stereotypes character—that is the vicious circle in which man is involved and there is no room for freedom of choice. (3) It is contended that if God is omnipotent, man cannot be free.

The answer to such arguments as these is

that while man is part of nature, experience proves that he can rise above nature. "There is a spirit in man." It is plain to us that many of the men and women whom we know are not the mere products of heredity and environment, for they have risen above or fallen beneath these influences. Moreover, man has the power of self-detachment whereby he can view himself and say: "That action was not worthy of me. Henceforth I determine to act otherwise." The inward "I ought" which is so deep-grounded within us seems to demand as its necessary corollary "I can." Until they begin to study philosophy most men take it for granted that they are free to choose between conflicting courses of action. All penal codes are based on this belief. If the consciousness of freedom is a delusion, it is a very widespread delusion. It is difficult to believe that an instinct or intuition so deep-seated is not to be trusted.

As to the objection that human freedom must limit the omnipotence of God, the answer is that in endowing man with freedom, God has *voluntarily* subjected himself to limitation; but the self-limitation of love is not really limitation; it is self-fulfillment.

It must, however, be admitted that man's freedom is not absolute. In the moral life

there are limits to our freedom. No man can act, at any given moment, in complete independence of his character. The will only realizes freedom insofar as it is brought into surrender and co-operation with the will of God, "whose service is perfect freedom." To a large extent we are creatures of habit, and in the main our conduct is the expression of our character. There appears to be a defect in our will, as a result of which it is easier to give effect to an evil choice than to a good choice. In the moral life we have liberty of choice, but only a limited liberty of giving effect to our higher choice.

It is here that the grace of God comes to our aid and enables us to achieve freedom. The grace of God breaks through the chain of cause and effect, cuts off the entail of the past, and endows the will with the power which makes it more than conqueror. Thus we only attain to the widest and highest ranges of freedom as we draw upon the resources of the divine grace in Jesus Christ. Man has freedom of choice, but in order to give effect to his choice in the worthiest moral action, he needs the moral dynamic of the grace of God.

Summary. We may sum up Christian teaching by saying that man is regarded as a *personality*, self-conscious and self-determining.

His personality derives its worth from its moral and spiritual capacities. It is a personality made for fellowship with God and capable of growing into the likeness of God. Such a fellowship cannot be broken even by death. Man's nature is to be interpreted in the light of these governing facts. He is potentially a child of God, with all the moral and spiritual possibilities therein implied. As we shall see in the next chapter, man's fellowship with God is marred by sin, but the message of the gospel is that, in and through Christ, God redeems man into the fellowship of sons. Man realizes the glory of his nature and rises to the height of his calling when he is reconciled to God, is brought by Christ to a realization of his sonship, and strives to live as a child of God. But although Christianity thus teaches the sacredness of each separate personality and its intrinsic worth in the sight of God, the individual is not regarded as existing for himself alone. He is a member of a family, and he, apart from his brothers, is not made perfect.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF SIN

We have been considering the constitution of human nature. We found that man is made in the image of God, is called to be the child of God. But both Scripture and experience teach us that the image is marred, the sonship is broken. This is due to sin. It will be convenient to discuss this question under the following heads: (1) The Historical Origin of Sin. (2) The Consequences of Sin. (3) The Nature and Meaning of Sin. Strictly speaking, the third division should be considered first. But an adequate definition of sin can only be reached after sin has been viewed in the light of its history and of the development of Christian thought on the subject. Meanwhile we may accept as a provisional definition—sin is the disobedience of a free agent to the will of God. We shall have to look at the matter more closely later in the chapter.

A. The Historical Origin of Sin

Christian theology has been largely dominated by the story recorded in Genesis 3, but an edifice has been reared on this story which it will not bear. Deductions have been drawn

from it for which there is no warrant in the narrative.

The inspiration of the story does not depend on whether it is literal history or not. Inspiration is manifested, not merely in creative thought, but in the use that is made of pre-existent material. The biblical story stands apart from all other similar stories by reason of its spirituality of outlook, its depth of moral insight, and its apprehension of the one living God, from disobedience to whom sin arises. These are infallible marks of inspiration. The story of the Fall is a wonderful description of sin and of its psychological origin in the race and in the individual.

The narrative of Genesis 3 appears to have exercised hardly any influence on Old Testament thought. It is only when we pass to the literature (outside the Bible) of the second century B. C. that we find the Genesis story playing an important part in Jewish theology.

There is no record in the Gospels that our Lord ever referred to Genesis 3, or, indeed, threw any light upon the historical origin of sin. His main concern is with the fact of sin and with its forgiveness. It is only in the writings of Paul that the story of the Fall attains to any prominence. But careful consideration of the relevant passages shows that

nowhere does his argument depend for its validity upon the literal truth of Genesis 3. Paul's argument is directed not to the defense of a particular theory of the origin of sin, but to exposition of redemption from sin through Jesus Christ. "Sin in its unity and universality may be taken for granted, and it may also be overcome; but not even on the basis of the Bible—Old Testament or New—will its origin ever be explained."

B. The Consequences of Sin

1. Theology usually treats of the consequences of sin under three heads: (1) Original Sin, or depravity, (2) Guilt, (3) Death.

(1.) *Original Sin.* It is held that "the guilt of the first transgression is reckoned in its consequences upon all the race represented by the first transgressor, but not apart from their own sin; all are not only regarded as sinners, but made sinners also through the inheritance of a nature of itself inclined only to evil." This idea is supposed to be ultimately derived from Genesis 3. But there is no hint of such a suggestion in this chapter. It is not stated that Adam's sin was the cause of the sin of succeeding generations. Nor is this teaching found anywhere in the Old Testament. The Old Testament teaches clearly that *sin is*

universal (Job 4. 17, R. V., mg.; 14. 4; 25. 4; Prov. 20. 9; 1 Kings 8. 46; 2 Chron. 6. 36; Eccl. 7. 20; Psa. 130. 3; 143. 2). Nowhere is this universal sinfulness connected with the Fall. This teaching belongs to extra-biblical Jewish literature of the second century B. C. There is no record in the Gospels that our Lord ever spoke of man as having an inborn tendency to sin *derived from the Fall.* Our Lord plainly declares the reality and universality of sin as an actual fact of experience (Matt. 7. 11; Luke 11. 13), but did not concern himself with the question of origin. Paul, on the other hand, uses freely prevailing Jewish ideas as to the origin of human sinfulness. It was natural that he should use these modes of thought, as he used others derived from Jewish sources. It may fairly be questioned whether ideas which have their source in Judaism and have no support in our Lord's teaching are to be regarded as an essential part of Christian teaching. The crucial point is that Paul held racial depravity to be a fact. His explanation of that fact is of secondary interest.

(2.) *Guilt.* It has been held that all Adam's descendants have inherited his guilt. Augustine wrote that "one sin, admitted into a place where such perfect happiness reigned, was of so

heinous a character that in one man the whole race was originally and radically condemned." It is true, of course, that all men have gone the way of Adam, and are responsible for sinful acts and liable to punishment. It cannot be said, however, in any real meaning of the words, that each man is morally responsible for the sin of Adam. Yet there is a profound element of truth in the idea that all men are under sin's condemnation. The race is a unity. As no man liveth to himself, so no man sinneth to himself. We all suffer for one another's sins. According to the Gospels, our Lord did teach that the whole race is under condemnation because of sin, though the offer of redemption is more emphatic than the note of condemnation. But there is no suggestion that the condemnation is on account of inherited guilt of Adam's sin.

(3.) *Death.* Much has been made by theologians of the idea that physical death is the penalty of Adam's sin. The idea has been based partly on a misinterpretation of Genesis 2. 17. "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It is very doubtful whether the reference here is to physical death, for, as the narrative tells us, they did not die in the day that they ate thereof, and Genesis 3. 19 teaches that man was created mortal

("Dust thou art") and was therefore subject to death before he ate of the forbidden fruit. The theory which connects the subjection of the whole race to the law of death with the sin of our first parents appears for the first time in literature at the beginning of the second century B. C. "From a woman was the beginning of sin, and because of her we all die" (Ecclesiasticus 25. 24).

We must therefore approach the teaching of the New Testament bearing in mind the fact that the idea which connects sin with physical death has its roots in Jewish literature. This, of course, does not prove that it is erroneous. Since, however, the idea appears to be absent from the teaching of our Lord, it may well be that it is no part of the Christian gospel, but is one of the temporary forms in which the apostles clothed the truth. If we turn to the teaching of Paul (Rom. 5. 12-21; cf. 1 Cor. 15), we find that there can be no doubt that he accepts the traditional idea connecting physical death from the fall of Adam. Doubtless this is implied in "the wages of sin is death," but his use of the word in different senses is not clearly differentiated. Sometimes it is used in the ordinary sense of physical death, but more often it refers to the total consequences of sin as they work themselves out in the personality,

including among them the death of the body.

Paul sounds the deepest note in 1 Cor. 15. 56, "The sting of death is sin." It is sin which gives death its significance in relation to conscience. The deepest element in the thought of Paul is, therefore, that sin entails moral consequences of so disintegrating and injurious a character as to be fittingly described by the word "death." These are the enduring penalties of sin, which it is the purpose of grace to avert.

2. *Development of Doctrine.* It is obviously only possible to indicate here the chief landmarks in the history of the doctrines relating to sin. The earliest revolt against the doctrine of the Fall and original sin was led by *Pelagius* (5th century). He taught that the sin of Adam injured himself only and not the whole human race; that Adam was created mortal and would have died whether he had sinned or not; that each man can live without sin if he wishes, as, indeed (so he held), some of the Old Testament saints did. Pelagius and his followers placed the whole emphasis on self-reliance. When they spoke (as they did) of the grace of God in Jesus Christ they meant little more than Christ's example; they did not emphasize the need of the appeal to God for strength in temptation. Pelagianism has

no explanation to offer of the universality of sin or of the depth of man's sense of guilt. It was formally condemned at the Council of Ephesus, 431 A. D.

The great opponent of Pelagianism was Augustine (354–430 A. D.). Pelagius and Augustine represent two tendencies of thought which are always at work—that which emphasizes the human element in the work of salvation and that which emphasizes the divine element. Augustine was the inventor of the expression "original sin," though he denied that he invented the doctrine. He held that because the whole human race existed potentially in Adam all men have an enfeebled and corrupt nature as the result of Adam's confession. Sin is passed on by the natural process of generation. Consequently, the race is a mass of sin or of mud. Augustine asserted man's total incapacity for good. The only freedom which he leaves man is freedom to sin. Man can do nothing good by his own unaided strength. For this he needs the grace of God. But Augustine regards grace not only as assisting the will but as absolutely controlling it; that is, grace is irresistible. But this teaching as to grace is qualified by his doctrine of predestination. God has predestined some to life and some to death; grace

works irresistibly in the former, but for the latter there is no way of salvation.

Unfortunately, the extreme doctrines of Augustine were taken over by Calvin and Luther, and became part of the heritage of the Protestant churches, to their subsequent embarrassment. The truth lies somewhere between Pelagius and Augustine. Each laid one-sided emphasis on one of two complementary affirmations of Paul: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"; "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to work." Pelagius was quite right in pointing out that man has a part to play in his own salvation, but he was wrong in teaching that this part is pure self-reliance rather than cooperation with God. Augustine was fundamentally right in his assertion that salvation is the work of God, but he was wrong in reducing man to a mere automaton, as he was in teaching that man is utterly corrupt and depraved. Augustine was nearer the truth than Pelagius. When the doctrines of total depravity and the bondage of the will and irresistible grace are removed from Augustinianism, there remain doctrines which express the essential truths of the gospel. The Pauline assertion which Augustine reaffirmed—"By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not

of yourselves; it is the gift of God"—is the very heart of the gospel. Evangelical theology places this great truth at the center, while still allowing that man responds to and co-operates with God.

3. *Constructive Statement.* What are the affirmations which theology can make to-day as to the historical origin and consequences of sin? As to the origin of sin, in view of its universality and of the fact that there is a defect in man's will which makes evil easier than good, it is easy to believe in a Fall—some great catastrophe which has cast a blight upon man. The whole question, however, is of little more than speculative interest. Our Lord never concerned himself with it. What is vital to Christian theology is not any particular theory of the historical origin of sin, but the reality and universality of the fact of sin. Ours is a sinful race in need of redemption.

The facts which lie behind the teaching of the Bible are these: (1) That a real choice between good and evil was necessary if man was to develop as a free moral personality. There is no warrant either in Genesis or elsewhere for the belief that man began his course in a state of "original righteousness." On any theory that can be held, he began his career in a state of innocence in which the difference

between right and wrong had no meaning for him. If he was to develop as a moral personality, the time was bound to come when his eyes should be opened to know good and evil, and when he should make his choice between them. Sin was not necessary to his development, but temptation was. (2) That sin is an evil power, alien to the divine purpose. (3) That sinful tendencies are inseparable from the stock from which we spring. (4) That the race is an organism, all the members of which suffer or rejoice together, so that we have a vital concern in the sins of others as well as in our own.

When we turn to consider the consequences of sin, the first truth that confronts us is that *sin is a racial fact.* "The sins of the world are many, but the sin of the world is one." The doctrine of original sin emphasizes the fact that every man is born with a sinful inheritance. What precisely does this mean? We have first to take account of what is called "social heredity." Each individual is influenced by the social inheritance received from previous generations, as that is embodied in laws, customs, institutions and the whole environment of man, and as the environment in its turn has reacted on human nature. Scientific teaching as to heredity has not as yet

reached firm conclusions, but it is agreed that while a man cannot inherit sinful qualities, he may inherit sinful tendencies. "A man may inherit a high degree or a low degree of sensibility to the pleasures of sin or of alcoholic drink, or a tendency to explosions of resentment; he does not inherit profligacy or drunkenness or wrath." A man's character depends on how he controls or directs these tendencies. But in reply to this it may be pointed out with truth that it is easier to do evil than to do good. The race seems to suffer from an inherited defect of will, whatever the cause of it. The will seems impotent to make an enduring choice of good, apart from the resources of divine grace. Sin is fundamentally irrational; it is the negation of all that is reasonable. Whether there has been a historical fall or not, ours is a fallen race, in the sense that our *state* has universally fallen short of our *nature* as sons of God.

The conception of original guilt cannot be defended. In a strict sense a man is guilty only of those sins for which he is accountable. But the principle of sin is one in every age. Insofar as we have ourselves yielded to sins, we feel that we share the guilt of the world. Yet we are not true to the gospel if we separate the consideration of sin from that of grace.

The inability of the unaided will is only one side of Christian teaching; the other side is "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12. 9). Sin abounds, but grace much more abounds.

C. The Nature and Meaning of Sin

1. *Old Testament Ideas of Sin.* In early times Israel shared many of the ideas of sin common to other peoples. The idea of sin, in its early form, is simply that of which the deity (or deities) disapproves. In the earliest parts of the Old Testament sin is represented as disobedience to the statutes regulating the religious and social life of Israel, but these are conceived of as the will of the deity. Primitive peoples regarded the will of the deity as acting quite arbitrarily. There could be no certainty as to what he approved or condemned. The early idea of sin is purely external; it is the performance or neglect of external acts. Men have not yet learned to distinguish between act and motive. They come into right relations with God by the observance of ritual. In early times the guilt of a particular sin attached not merely to the sinner himself, but to his kinsmen and fellow tribesmen.

The great prophets gave their countrymen a more moral conception of God and conse-

quently a more moral conception of sin. Sin is still the transgression of the will of God, but there is a more moral conception of the divine will. Moreover, God is no longer regarded as being satisfied with rites and material gifts. He desires loyalty and affection. After the Exile sins against ritual laws come into prominence once more. After the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel there was a clear realization that sin is a matter of individual responsibility, though the idea of the unity of the moral life of the nation was never lost sight of. The highest point in Old Testament teaching as to sin is reached in Psa. 51 when sin is felt to be disobedience to a good and holy God and it is realized that the supreme penalty of sin is alienation from God. Sin is no longer viewed as a mere external action; it is, rather, the sinful heart and character that the psalmist has in mind.

2. New Testament Ideas of Sin. The Christian man naturally turns first and foremost to our Lord's teaching for guidance as to the nature of sin. According to the *synoptic* record, he taught that sin is directed primarily against God (Luke 15. 18). It is "broken sonship." It is the refusal of love and obedience to the all-wise and all-loving Father. Jesus taught that sin is *universal.* He began his ministry saying,

"Repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1. 15). The demand for repentance implies sinfulness. He said, "If ye then, being evil" (Matt. 7. 11), and "None is good" (Matt. 19. 17, R. V., mg.). Sin consists in wrong motives and intentions as well as in wrong acts (Matt. 5. 27ff.); it has its roots in the heart. "From within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed. . . . All these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7. 21ff.). But it is the emphasis which our Lord placed on the forgiveness of sins which most of all reveals the seriousness which he attributed to sin (Luke 15. 11-32; Matt. 18. 23-35). Ignorance is only a partial excuse for sin (Luke 12. 48; cf. 23. 34). The words used to denote sin in the synoptics indicate the missing of a mark or the transgression of a law. The former is the more frequent meaning, but it is not to be interpreted in the merely negative sense of failure. It is to choose a lower ideal when a higher is present to the consciousness. And this brings us to what is regulative in the Christian conception of sin. Jesus Christ himself is the ideal and standard of conduct. It is as we fall short of his spirit that we violate the conditions of sonship and thus fall into sin.

In the *fourth Gospel* Jesus is represented as

teaching that sin is bondage. "Everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin" (8. 34). The capital sin is that of unbelief in Christ (16. 9); that is, the Christian ideal of sin is refusal of the ideal of Sonship embodied in Christ.

We need only refer here to those aspects of Pauline teaching to which reference has not already been made. The universality of sin is realistically described in Rom. 1-3. As in the case of our Lord so in that of Paul, the seriousness of his view of sin is proved by the overwhelming importance which he attaches to forgiveness (Rom. 5-7). Sin is almost personified and is represented as an indwelling power, which paralyzes the will (Rom. 7. 17f.).

According to *First John* to sin is to fall short of our high calling as the children of God (3. 1-4). More particularly it is to fail in love (2. 7-11).

The Epistle of James echoes the teaching of Jesus when it says "Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed" (1. 14; cf. Mark 7. 21ff.). James speaks of sin in relation to the law, rather than in relation to God, but the law is the law of Christ (2. 8; 4. 11f.). He who keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point is become guilty of all (2. 10). To sin even in what seems a small

matter is to surrender to the principle and the power of sin.

3. In discussing the *meaning* of sin, we cannot overlook certain modern theories, for example, those of the evolutionist and the psychologist. The former holds that to sin is to yield to the brute inheritance in each of us instead of working out the beast; the latter contends that sin is failure to control our instincts. Both statements are doubtless true, as far as they go. But they are not exhaustive. Some of the worst sins (for example, lying and hatred) originate in the mind rather than in the bodily organism. These theories explain *how*, but not *why* men sin. They leave us with "an unsolved mystery of iniquity which throws us back on personal freedom."

4. At the beginning of the chapter we adopted as a provisional definition, "Sin is the disobedience of a free agent to the will of God." How far can this definition be allowed to stand in the light of our investigation? In the first place, we must recognize that sin can only be attributed to an agent who is free. Sin is the outcome of the free choice of evil in preference to good. It must be agreed too that sin is a matter which affects our relation to God. It is not merely the choice of the lower, in preference to the higher, though it is

always that. It is to fall short of our high calling as sons of God. It is to break the sonship. How far does the idea of accountability (which is implied in disobedience) enter into the meaning of sin? It is obvious that we sometimes choose the lower rather than the higher in ignorance that it is the lower. Moral standards vary. What is held to be wrong in one age may be deemed right in another age, and *vice versa*. Is the term "sin" to be applied indiscriminately to wrong in these various senses? I cannot be held accountable for my wrongdoing unless the higher standard was within my grasp, or unless my ignorance was my own fault. Should sin be limited to this sense of the word? Paul wrote "to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean" (Rom. 14. 14); that is, if, judging a particular course of action by the highest standards which I know, I deem it to be sinful, then for me it is sinful, but for someone else who is governed by different standards (which he thinks to be as high as mine) it may not be sinful. It is obvious that the word "sinful" in this context carries the implication of accountability for sin. Are we to limit the word "sin" to that wrongdoing for which our conscience holds us accountable? The present writer thinks not; for what we may honestly

deem to be right may be wrong in the sight of God. It is very difficult to alter the usage of long-established theological terms, and it may be doubted whether it is desirable in this case. It may fairly be contended that the definition "Sin is the disobedience of a free agent to the will of God" is too narrow and individual. A term is needed to cover that which is wrong in disposition or actions not merely from the relative viewpoint of accountability, but from the absolute standpoint of God—all that which breaks the sonship, that from which the world, in every age, needs to be redeemed. It seems as though we must retain the word "sin" for this wider reality—not merely for the sins for which individuals are accountable, but "the sin of the world." Sin may, then, be defined as every disposition and action which is out of harmony with the holy will of our heavenly Father.

CHAPTER VI

THE RECONCILIATION OF MAN AND GOD

We have seen that God is the Father of all men, that he loves all and desires all to live in fellowship with him as sons. On the other hand, we have also found that human sin has broken the sonship and clouds the fellowship. Man stands in need of God's forgiveness, and of deliverance from sin and guilt. The question arises whether it is possible for a righteous God to forgive sin without injury to the interests of righteousness? Is it possible to remove the stains of guilt from man's conscience, and to break the fetters of sinful habit? Can men and God be reconciled? The New Testament teaches that the *death of Christ* stands in a vital relation to the forgiveness of sins, and to deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. For this reason theology has been accustomed to speak of the death of Christ as an *atonement* for sin. But the word "atonement" is not a New Testament word. The word which is used in the New Testament is *reconciliation*. The New Testament writers do not tell us precisely how the death of Christ

secures the forgiveness of sins. Indeed, in the main, the different writers expound the truth in different ways. But all agree that forgiveness is mediated to men through the cross. Limits of space do not permit a detailed discussion here of the relevant New Testament passages. We must content ourselves with a summary of the main lines of thought on the subject in the New Testament.

1. *New Testament Teaching.* (1) Our Lord is identified with Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Isa. 53). The identification is not made in so many words, but is suggested in the following passages, Luke 4. 18; 22. 37; Mark 8. 31; cf. 10. 33; 1 Pet. 2. 21-24.

(2) There are passages which seem to indicate that the vital element in the sacrifice of the cross was our Lord's unflinching obedience to the demands of truth and righteousness (John 18. 37; Heb. 10. 9).

(3) In the Pauline Epistles, the reconciliation is always represented as the act of God in Christ. The idea of a schism in the Godhead is entirely alien to Paul. In his view, Christ did nothing which was not the direct expression of the Father's righteousness and love (2 Cor. 5. 19). Christ is described as a "propitiation," but it is God himself who sets him forth as such (Rom. 3. 25), so that there

is a wide gulf between this idea and the pagan idea of appeasement.

(4) Paul expounds the mystical idea of victory over sin through crucifixion with Christ, burial with him, and resurrection with him to newness of life (Gal. 2. 20; cf. Rom. 6-8).

(5) The fourth Gospel, although it recognizes the central significance of the death of Christ, does not view it in isolation, but as the culmination of our Lord's life. The cross is the supreme event in that process whereby "light" and "life" entered the world.

(6) Rev. 13. 8 reads "And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, everyone whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world." The words suggest that the principle of sacrifice is eternal in the Godhead and that this principle found its supreme temporal manifestation in the incarnation, culminating in the cross.

(7) In order to expound the significance of the cross the New Testament uses, to a limited extent, the category of *sacrifice* (Mark 14. 24; Matt. 26. 28; Luke 22. 20; Rom. 3. 25; 8. 3; 1 Cor. 5. 7; Eph. 5. 2; 1 Pet. 1. 2, 18f.; 1 John 4. 10; and the Epistle to the Hebrews).

The interpretation of the sacrificial terminology used in the New Testament is difficult

because we have no certain knowledge as to what was the significance attached to sacrifice in the New Testament.

In primitive religion sacrifice was probably at first regarded as a means of *communion* between the god and his worshiper. Side by side with this, or possibly later, arose the idea of sacrifice as a *gift* to the god. This idea dominates the sacrificial thought of the Old Testament. What was the motive of the gift? Was it a thankoffering, or was it intended to appease the anger of Jehovah? The answer is not clear. Doubtless both motives operated at different times, but it cannot be stated dogmatically what was the significance attached to the gift in the time of our Lord. There can be no doubt that the substitutionary idea had entered into Jewish religious thought and into the interpretation of sacrifice. But whether this was the dominant view is very doubtful. In any case, the idea of the gift was gradually spiritualized. It came to be seen that the most costly gift which a man can offer is *himself*. The gifts offered in sacrifice thus became typical of the worshiper's self-surrender. The sin-offering (which appears to have been one of the later sacrifices) does not seem to have had a substitutionary or propitiatory significance. The purpose of the imposition of the

hand of the offerer on the victim is not the transference of guilt from him to the victim. Were sin transferred to the victim, its flesh would necessarily be regarded as unclean, whereas it is stated to be holy (Lev. 6. 17, 25; 7. 6). Further, on the Day of Atonement, it is not the sacrificial goat, but the nonsacrificial goat that bears away the sins of the people into the wilderness.

It is quite likely that the Jews of the first century A. D., as also their predecessors, observed the ritual of sacrifice because it was commanded in the law, and without any conscious desire or attempt to penetrate to its inner meaning. But insofar as it was interpreted, the evidence does not warrant the belief that it was always regarded as a substitutionary or penal offering. On the contrary, it was sometimes interpreted as a rite typifying inward processes of penitence and self-surrender. It is significant that the writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, who sees in Jewish sacrifices a type of the sacrifice of Christ, spiritualizes the idea of sacrifice. For him, the essential element in sacrifice is self-surrender. The efficacious element in the sacrifice of Christ is his self-surrender to God in his sinless life and death. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal

Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (9. 14). Christ did away with the old sacrifices by his emphasis upon and his obedience to the moral and spiritual principles, which lay at the heart of the old ritual rightly interpreted. He said, "Lo, I am come to do thy will" (10. 9). "By which will," says the author, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (10. 10). He does not develop any theory as to how the sinless self-surrender of Christ sanctifies us. Christ's sacrifice "acts on the conscience through the mind interpreting its significance and in proportion as it is thought on."

It would seem that it is in the light of such ideas as these that we must interpret the idea of sacrifice as applied to the death of Christ in the New Testament, and not by the aid of lower and mechanical conceptions which survived side by side with these in New Testament times.

The above summary of the main lines of New Testament thought on the relation between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins does not reveal any clear-cut doctrine of the atonement. The New Testament does not take us much further than the statements

"Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15. 3), "the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3. 18). It was left to the church to work out the implications of these statements under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth.

2. *Development of Doctrine.* The early church was more concerned with the problem of Christ's person than with that of his work. At first there was little effort at constructive thought on this subject. The early Fathers, in the main, simply reproduced the language of the New Testament. From the third century to the twelfth the theory that Christ's death was a ransom paid to the devil dominated theological thought, though it is not clear whether the language used was metaphorical or meant that an actual transaction took place between God and the devil. This theory did not survive the teaching of *Anselm* (1033–1109), who approached the question from the standpoint of the satisfaction for sin which is due to God's honor. If God were to forgive the sinner unpunished, he would be treating the sinner and the sinless in the same way. It is therefore due to the honor of God that sin be punished. But God in his mercy accepts satisfaction in place of punishment—the satisfaction which was offered by Christ when "in

some way he gave himself up, or something of himself, for the glory of God, for which he was not a debtor." *Abelard* (1079–1142) regarded the cross primarily as a manifestation of redeeming love. "Our redemption is that highest love in us brought about by the passion of Christ, a love which not only sets us free from the slavery of sin, but acquires for us the true liberty of the sons of God, that we may be filled with love rather than with all fear of Him who showed us so great grace, than which, on his own witness, none greater can be found."

Abelard did not show how the passion of Christ kindles love within us and sets us free from the slavery of sin, nor did he show why love *must* choose this way of manifesting itself.

The Reformers developed the theory of *Penal Substitution.* According to this theory, God's attitude to the sinner is necessarily one of wrath, because justice demands the punishment of sin. Christ is the sinner's representative, or, rather, substitute, and as such he bore the dire punishment of sin. The demands of justice are therefore satisfied and God's anger is turned away.

Faustus Soccinus (1539–1604) attacked the satisfaction and penal theories root and branch.

He held that Christ saves by his teaching and example. The cross opened the way for his resurrection as the result of which he exercises his priestly office in heaven.

Grotius (1583–1645) restated the penal theory from a new point of view. The sufferings of Christ seemed to him to have been not so much a satisfaction to God as to public right. This theory is known as the *Governmental* theory. Christ died to vindicate the authority of the divine law. His sufferings were not retributive, but deterrent.

The theory of penal substitution in one form or another has dominated the thought of the evangelical churches down to modern times. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century many attempts have been made to restate the doctrine of the atonement. Some have attempted to state the satisfaction and penal theories in a new way; others have aimed at stating theories which have seemed to their authors to be more in harmony with the moral sense. To the former class belongs the work of Dr. R. W. Dale. Doctor Dale was evidently conscious of the objections to the penal theory, but he did not succeed in breaking away from it. He held that Christ suffered the due reward of sin himself instead of letting it fall on the sinner, and thus offered satisfaction to

the "eternal law of righteousness." But the "eternal law of righteousness" is a mere abstraction if viewed apart from God.

Passing to writers who repudiate the theory of penal substitution and find the meaning of the cross in other directions, *McLeod Campbell* developed an idea to which much prominence has been given, that Christ offered to God on behalf of humanity the sacrifice of vicarious penitence.

The theory which is commanding most assent in the opening years of the twentieth century is that which was first stated in developed form by *Horace Bushnell.* He conceived of the cross as the supreme manifestation in time of the sacrifice which is eternal in the heart of God. "There is a cross in God, before the wood is seen on Calvary, hid in God's own virtue itself, struggling as heavily in burdened feeling through all the previous ages, struggling as heavily now, even in the throne of the worlds. This too, exactly, is the cross that our Christ crucified reveals and sets before us. Let us come, then, not to the wood alone, not to the nails, . . . but to the very feeling of our God, and there take shelter." This theory is not a bare assertion that the cross saves by manifesting the love of God. It seeks to show how the love thus manifested

saves. The cross is not a mere dramatic representation of the love of God. It is the manifestation in time of the eternal travail of God in resistance to sin. This revelation of love reconciles the sinner to God through acting on his conscience as the mind apprehends its meaning.

3. *Lines of Construction.* It need hardly be said that no theory contains the whole truth concerning the relation of the cross to the reconciliation of man and God. It is perhaps too much to hope that such a theory will ever be forthcoming. Probably every theory that has been promulgated and which has commanded some measure of assent among Christians has within it some element of truth, and has made some contribution to the enrichment of Christian thought. It is worth while to remark at this point that men are reconciled to God through the cross and not through any theory of the cross. Multitudes have been saved from sin and reconciled to God by the power of the cross who have not consciously held any theory of the atonement. The crucified Christ makes his own appeal to mind and heart and conscience, and often these are illumined and moved and quickened, so that truth is apprehended by swift processes which are not easily analyzed. The evangelist, there-

fore, need not be silent until the theologians provide him with a satisfactory theory. Nevertheless the evangelist and the theologian may be coworkers. If the cross acts on the conscience through the mind interpreting its significance, the evangelist's message will be with greater power if the theologian has helped his mind to interpret to other minds the significance of the cross. The duty devolves on the theologian, therefore, to persevere in his task, even though he is aware that he cannot attain finality. When the full-orbed vision of a many-sided truth is too much for us, it means a great deal if we can catch some glimpses of it from different angles.

The following statements about the cross would probably command the assent (with varying emphasis) of most theologians (whatever their own particular theories), and it is well to concentrate on agreements rather than differences.

1. As McLeod Campbell taught, the cross is to be interpreted "by its own light." That is to say, we are not to start with preconceived ideas as to what God or Love or Justice is, or with theories as to how a perfect reconciliation ought to be accomplished, but we must begin with the experience of the redeeming efficacy of the cross and must seek to understand its

implications. Doctrine should not be shaped by forcing faith into certain molds, but should be the outcome of faith thinking in terms of history and experience. This is why we can never feel that any theory of the cross is completely adequate. For the cross unfolds more and more of its meaning as we grow in the Christian life.

2. The cross is concerned with the *relation of persons*. Theories of the cross are not helpful except as they show how through the death of Christ men may be brought into a right relation with God, and enter into the fellowship of sons. We shall do well to avoid the realm of abstractions and to keep to the realm of personal relations. "Christ also suffered for sins once . . . *that he might bring us to God*" (1 Pet. 3. 18).

3. The cross reveals God's attitude to sin, both in his resistance of it and in his condemnation of it. It is impossible for anyone who views sin in the light of the cross to treat it with levity. The sense of sin, as sin against *God*, has been born at the cross as nowhere else, as men have realized what sin did to the eternal Son of God, and what God in Christ did and endured in order to express his condemnation of sin and to overcome it.

4. The act of reconciliation in the cross was

the *act of God.* "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3. 16). Nor does the power of the cross lie in the fact that it shows us human nature at its highest in Jesus Christ, offering its best to God—though incidentally it does that. But the cross derives its saving power from the fact that it was a sacrificial act of God in Christ on behalf of man.

5. The supreme motive of the cross was the love of God. Whatever else some theories have failed to see in the cross, probably no single theory has entirely missed the vision of grace. Origen and Augustine, Anselm and Abelard, the Reformers and all the modern interpreters would have joined in singing the evangelical hymn.

> "O 'twas love! 'twas wondrous love,
> The love of God to me,
> It brought the Saviour from above
> To die on Calvary."

The divine love active in the cross had as its object not merely individuals, but the whole race. Jesus Christ in the power which he exercises through the cross has become the Head of a new humanity. It was not for nothing that the early Christians were called

by their contemporaries "the third race." They had become a new race, different from Greeks and Barbarians and from Jews and Gentiles—"new creations," "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession," to "show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2. 9). The cross is therefore the means of the creation of a new humanity, obedient to new laws, governed by new forces and manifesting a new collective righteousness.

If the race is to be reconciled to God, the antagonism of contending wills must be overcome. Reason and the ordinary bonds of social life achieve this to some extent, but a radical reconciliation is only brought about insofar as minds and hearts and wills come under an influence which regenerates and transforms them. Every other apparent reconciliation is superficial. History and experience prove that the only reconciling power which strikes down to the roots of human thoughts and feelings is love, and especially the love of God, in which the perverse and conflicting wills of men find a center of unity, so that being reconciled to God they are reconciled to one another. Love is the explanation of the incarnation, and love must be the

explanation of the climax of the incarnation, namely the death of Christ. God, out of his great love for us, took upon himself our nature, "bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows." It would seem as though in a world such as ours in which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together," because of the conflict of contending wills, and in which sin is never resisted and overcome without suffering, the suffering of the cross was a moral necessity, if the purpose of love which is eternal in the heart of God and was revealed in the incarnation was to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE ancient Hebrews used the term "spirit" (breath, or wind) to signify the invisible principle of life and invisible beings, good or bad. From this beginning, Old Testament thought rises to the conception of the Spirit of the one God.

1. *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament.* The Spirit is active in creation (Gen. 1. 2; Psa. 104. 30), is the source of intellect in man (Job 32. 8) and of special endowments (Gen. 41. 38; Exod. 28. 3; 31. 3) and is the inspirer of lawgivers, poets, and prophets (Num. 11. 17, 25f.; 2 Sam. 23. 3; 1 Kings 22. 24; Ezek. 11. 5; Dan. 4. 8; 5. 11).

The action of the Spirit is universal in its range (Psa. 139. 7), but it is especially associated with the redemptive mission of Israel and with the work of the Messiah, upon whom the prophets foresaw that the Spirit would rest in the fullness of strength and goodness (Isa. 11. 2). Ultimately the gift of the Spirit is regarded as moral, and secures purity, strength, and penitence (Psa. 51. 11; Isa. 63. 10f.; Zech. 12. 10).

The prophets anticipated a wide extension of the operations of the Spirit of God in the days of the Messianic kingdom (Ezek. 37. 14; 39. 29; Isa. 32. 15; 44. 3; 59. 21; Zech. 12. 10; Joel 2. 28).

In the Old Testament it is often difficult to distinguish between God himself and the Spirit by which he moves in men's hearts. Nevertheless, the distinction exists. The Hebrew tendency was to think of God as being too majestic and remote for immediate approach and communion. This tendency is illustrated by the rise of beliefs in hierarchies of angels, intermediaries between man and God. But the belief in the Spirit of God is on a far higher plane and is characteristic of what was loftiest and deepest in the religious experience of Israel.

2. *The Spirit of God in the New Testament.* The references to the Spirit in the synoptic Gospels are scanty, as Pentecost had not yet occurred. The Spirit descends on our Lord at his baptism and equips him for his vocation (Matt. 3. 16; Mark 1. 10; Luke 3. 22), with the result that he leaves the Jordan "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4. 1). He is "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4. 1; Mark 1. 12; Luke 4. 1); that is to say, that in the fellow-

ship of the Spirit he was now constrained to face the problems and perplexities which had to be resolved, if he was to fulfill his ministry. After this he returns to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4. 14), and in the synagogue at Nazareth applies to himself the words "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," etc. (Luke 4. 18f.)

One or two very significant utterances of our Lord are recorded. He says to his disciples, "And when they lead you to judgment, and deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13. 11; Matt. 10. 20; Luke 12. 12). This seems to harmonize very closely with the teaching of the fourth Gospel as to the Paraclete. Again, there is no forgiveness for those who sin against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3. 28f.; Matt. 12. 31f.; Luke 12. 10). Our Lord is speaking of those who charge him with casting out devils by the power of Satan. To make such a charge is a sign of willful blindness to the truth. It is to say, "Evil be thou my good." For such a sin there is in the nature of the case no forgiveness, because those guilty of it are incapable of receiving forgiveness. This sin against the truth is described

as sin against the Holy Spirit. He is not here called the Spirit of Truth, as in the fourth Gospel, but the suggestion lies on the surface.

We have to turn to the fourth Gospel for a more detailed account of our Lord's teaching as to the Holy Spirit. The evangelist teaches that the gift of the Spirit was not given to the disciples until after Jesus was glorified (7. 39). The function of the Spirit is to carry on the work of Christ, when he has departed, and to carry it on on a wider scale and with more far-reaching results (16. 7f.).

How is this teaching, that the Spirit could come only after Jesus was glorified, to be reconciled with the fact that the Spirit was recognized to have been active in Old Testament times? The context makes clear that the meaning of the promises recorded by the evangelist is that the Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth, and whose primary function is *revelation*, will be given to men in greater fullness, and that his revelation will have a larger and deeper content after Jesus is glorified. The Spirit is described as the Paraclete, that is, the Comforter or Helper. He is the agent in the New Birth (3. 5), and is to interpret the Gospel anew to each succeeding age, bringing out the hidden implications of our Lord's teaching (14. 26; 16. 13f.).

At times it seems as though the coming of Christ in glory is confused with the coming of the Spirit. "I will not leave you desolate: I come to you" (14. 18). The reference here is clearly to what is commonly known as "The Second Coming." "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter" (14. 16). Plainly, the Paraclete is distinct from the risen and glorified Christ. But the two ideas are akin. The evangelist is restating the doctrine of the Second Coming in the light of his experience. The hope of the early and visible return of the Lord is fading, and he would have men realize that Christ comes again in every manifestation of the power of the Spirit. As in the writings of Paul, which we shall review later, the distinction is not clearly drawn between the Spirit and the living Christ, but that the evangelist made the distinction is certain, and the distinction is of such a nature as is possible for us dimly to apprehend.

The idea of the Spirit looms large in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The Lord had promised the disciples "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (1. 8). The narrative tells us that the gift of the Spirit came upon them all when they were assembled in one place

on the Day of Pentecost (chapter 2). The chapter describes a profound spiritual experience, the nature of which is not easily apprehended. But the results of the experience are quite evident. There came to the disciples a new sense of the presence and power of God. They were saved from regarding the gospel as a mere compendium of beliefs or as a code of ethics. Their religion became instinct with energy and force. They knew that they were not the followers of a dead hero, but that their Lord was alive among them in spiritual power. They were welded together into a holy fellowship, and they felt themselves to be endued with invincible power. They attributed this life-giving transformation to the gift of the Spirit. The church is simply the organ of the Spirit (20. 28).

It is in the Pauline Epistles that we find the beginnings of a theology of the Holy Spirit. For Paul the Spirit is that Divine Power which lays hold of our nature and inwardly transforms it. The Spirit stands in vital relation to the new life in Christ. The apostle's treatment of the doctrine is therefore practical and experiential rather than speculative. He believed in the Spirit as the Agent of the hidden life of God in the soul. He did not concern himself with the formu-

lation of a theory of the relation in which the Spirit stands to God and to Jesus Christ. He speaks of the Spirit sometimes as the Spirit of God (Rom. 8. 9; 1 Cor. 2. 11; 3. 16; 6. 11; 7. 40; 12. 3; 2 Cor. 3. 3; Phil. 3. 3), and sometimes as the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8. 9; 2 Cor. 3. 17f.; Phil. 1. 19).

But Paul distinguishes between the Spirit and the living Christ. The very expression "The Spirit of Christ" shows that he did not regard them as identical. Again, the benediction ("The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all") is strangely worded if Christ and the Spirit are identical.

By the Spirit, Paul means God as he dwells within men, making them conscious of the full moral meaning and power of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Jesus, in order to express this aspect of truth.

There are passages in the New Testament which recognize the immanence of God or his Word in all men and in all life (John 1. 1-9; Acts 17. 25; Heb. 1. 3). But in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is conceived as peculiarly the gift of God to the church. He works in and through the church. This is what might be expected if the Holy Spirit is not merely God immanent, but God immanent in such a

way as to bring to the believer's consciousness the full content and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. *Development of Doctrine.* The early Christians were vague and uncertain as to the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. The post-apostolic church followed apostolic precedent in associating the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son. Early baptismal creeds professed faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and early doxologies and hymns glorified the Spirit. The Spirit was regarded as the object of faith and adoration, yet no early creed or hymn called him God. Some writers of the second century even showed a tendency to confuse the Spirit with the Son. In 359 Athanasius reported some heretics who held that the Holy Spirit is simply "one of the ministering spirits." No attempt was made in our Nicene Creed to expound the nature of the divinity of the Spirit. It was simply affirmed that the Holy Spirit is "the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is to be worshiped and glorified." But a council of bishops which met at Rome in 369 affirmed that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are "of one Godhead, one power, one character, one essence." "In no respect do we separate

the Holy Spirit, but we adore him, together with the Father and the Son, as perfect in all things, in power, honor, majesty, and Godhead."

Augustine was the first to teach distinctly the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father. The words "and from the Son," which were later added to the Nicene Creed in the West, have never been accepted by the Eastern Church and form one of the grounds of division. Superficially, at any rate, the difference concerns a theological subtlety which need not greatly concern the ordinary Christian. But it does seem desirable that the creed should reflect the New Testament teaching that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The New Testament, as we have seen, speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in terms of deity. From these materials has been constructed the doctrine of the Trinity, namely, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three Persons in one God. This doctrine is not merely the outcome of men's speculation. It is an effort to do justice to the facts of the Christian revelation. Once these facts were accepted, the church was bound to develop a doctrine of the tri-unity of God, or to accept tri-theism (that is, the belief in three Gods). But Christianity is monotheistic (that is, believes in one God); consequently, the church developed the doctrine of the Trinity in order to safeguard its monotheism.

I. New Testament Teaching

The New Testament clearly represents the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as each possessed of divine attributes and fulfilling divine functions, and yet these three are not

represented as unrelated to one another. The Son is the Son of the Father, and the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Sometimes the three are all mentioned together as in Matt. 28. 19, "Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (many scholars question the authenticity of this passage, but for reasons which are not conclusive); in the apostolic benediction "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (2 Cor. 13. 14); and in Heb. 9. 14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God," etc. The New Testament does not go any further than this in the direction of constructing a doctrine.

II. Doctrinal Development

The early Christians were not greatly exercised with the problem of reconciling their belief in Father, Son and Holy Spirit with their traditional monotheism. It was enough for them that all three had been revealed by their Lord, and that they knew all three in their own personal experience, and that yet they were conscious of worshiping but one God. The practical issues which confronted

them placed limits upon their interest in speculative problems. But, in the nature of things, these problems were bound to be faced sooner or later, if only under pressure of criticism by the foes of Christianity. The development of the doctrines of the Son and of the Holy Spirit prepared the way for the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. In the first half of the third century certain teachers in Rome (chief of whom was *Sabellius*) taught that God is one Person, who manifests himself in three relations or aspects—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus it was the Father who suffered on the cross. *Tertullian* (died c. 220) wrote a treatise in reply which had a great influence on the terminology of Trinitarian doctrine. He used the term "substance" to signify divinity and all that is inherent in it. Then he laid it down that the three Persons of the Godhead possess this substance on equal terms, though in diverse manners. Some of the Greek Fathers, while adopting the Greek equivalent of Tertullian's terminology, emphasized the distinction of the Persons rather than the unity of the substance; whereas *Augustine*, the greatest of the Latin Fathers, laid the emphasis on the unity of the substance. The Greeks said, "There are three Persons in one God"; Augustine said,

"There is one God in three Persons." This is a real difference. If we lay down first the unity of the substance, we find it difficult afterward to account for the trinity of Persons; on the contrary, if we lay down first the trinity of Persons, we shall find it difficult to account for the unity of substance. In the former case we seem to incline to Sabellianism, in the latter to Tritheism.

The official thought of the church followed Augustine, but popular ideas have always tended in the direction of the Greek teaching; that is, popular conceptions have usually leaned in a tritheistic direction. Augustine's teaching is embodied in the Athanasian Creed (420–430 A. D.): "We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal: . . . The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. . . . There are not three Gods, but one God. . . . And in this Trinity none is afore or after another: none is greater or less than another. But the whole Three Persons are

coeternal and coequal." From this time trinitarian doctrine does not seem to have been seriously challenged until after the Reformation. The founder of Unitarianism was *Faustus Socinus* (1539–1604), who taught that the doctrine of the Trinity is contrary both to reason and the Scripture.

III. Exposition of the Doctrine

It must be said at once that it is impossible to state the doctrine of the Trinity in so simple a way as to make it absolutely comprehensible to the reason. All that can be done is to state as clearly as possible the traditional teaching of the church, and then to attempt to state it in modern terms.

1. God is One. There are not three Gods, but one.

2. The Godhead is one Being, consisting of three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The word "Person" was not used in its full modern sense. On the one hand the Fathers sought to avoid the idea of three modes or aspects of the Divine Being; on the other hand they sought to avoid tritheism.

3. The three Persons possess the same essence. They are coeternal and coequal.

4. The three Persons equally possess the fullness of the Godhead, and the act of each

Person is in a real sense the act of all three.

The best modern statement of the doctrine is the suggestion that in the Godhead there are three centers of One Consciousness and of one Activity. A great philosopher has said that perfect personality belongs only to God. May it not be that the highest type of personality is tripersonal, that is, has three self-conscious subjects of experience whose Being is one? That is, they have absolute community of thought, purpose and love.

IV. Analogies

Different writers have used analogies drawn from nature and from human nature in order to illumine the mystery of the Trinity. Tertullian used the illustrations of the root, the tree, the fruit, forming one plant; of the fountain, the river, the stream, water being the one substance; of the sun, the ray and the terminating point of the ray, light being the one substance.

Augustine speaks of the spring, the river, and the cup of the same substantial water; and the root, the trunk, the branch of the same wood. These illustrations are intended to help toward the apprehension of the idea of the procession of the Son and Spirit from the Father. It is doubtful, however, whether they

are any real aid to thought in a region where all things go out in mystery.

Other analogies have been used to aid the apprehension of the idea of three Persons in one Being. Since man is made in the image of God, it is supposed that a reflection of the Trinity may be found in human nature. Augustine finds the image of the Trinity in the human soul which knows itself and loves itself; in memory, intelligence, and will; in the object that is seen, the vision, and attention of the one who sees. The objection to this kind of analogy, which depends on an analysis of human consciousness, is that it leads to a Sabellian view of the Trinity. We cannot find three persons in consciousness, but only three modes of the one person's activity. We have to accept the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be completely rationalized. Neither argument nor analogy can make it perfectly comprehensible to the reason. The doctrine is given by revelation, and being thus given it may be shown not to be contrary to reason, and even to satisfy some of the most insistent demands of the reason.

V. The Practical Significance of the Doctrine

This doctrine has not a merely speculative

interest, as is so often supposed. It stands vitally related to the essential truths of the Christian revelation. The following instances illustrate this contention:

1. *The Fatherhood of God.* Christianity teaches that God is "our Father." This is not a mere form or figure to suggest his love. It is not a mere synonym for "Creator." The doctrine of the Trinity asserts that God is eternally and essentially Father. He is the eternal Father of the eternal Son. Fatherhood, therefore, belongs to the innermost nature of God. The Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God does not depend simply on the fact that our Lord taught us to call God "our Father." It is deep-grounded in the eternal essence of God.

2. *God Is Love.* The doctrine of the Trinity gives us the most certain assurance possible that God is love. If God's inmost nature is love, he must have loved from eternity. He cannot have waited for an object of love till the process of creation was begun. The doctrine of the Trinity assures us that God is tripersonal. He does not need to go outside himself for an object of love. God is love, not merely in relation to his creatures, but in his inmost essence. He is eternally and essentially love.

3. The implications of the doctrine of the Trinity help us to believe in both the *transcendence* and *immanence* of God. In the Father we see God transcendent; and in the Holy Spirit, God immanent.

4. *Personality as Social.* The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that personality is to be attributed to God not as one Person, but as three. The personality of God is Supreme Reality, and it takes the form of a fellowship of Persons, a communion of will, intelligence, and love, the basal relations of persons not being physical. From this follows the very practical lesson that the way to the perfect realization of personality is fellowship. The one Perfect Personality is a society. Self-realization is through fellowship, through community of will, intelligence, and love.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not primarily a speculative doctrine. It is a speculative construction of materials provided by revelation and by Christian experience. The definition has stood the test of time, and it is difficult not to believe that the church was divinely guided in framing it. But the definition in its terminology and in its description of processes in the internal life of the Godhead goes beyond New Testament teaching. There may, of course, be legitimate developments,

but it is impossible to deny the speculative elements present. For this reason there are some who, while holding firmly to the triunity of God, think it best to go no further in the way of definition than the use of New Testament terms. John Wesley, in his sermon on the Trinity, said: "I insist on no explanation at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean that which is given in the creed commonly ascribed to Athanasius. . . . I dare not insist on any one's using the word 'Trinity' or 'Person.' I use them myself without any scruple, because I know of none better; but if any man has any scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them? . . . I would insist only on the direct words, unexplained, just as they lie in the text."

CHAPTER IX

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE INDIVIDUAL

THE gospel of Christ is the gospel of *salvation.* Our Lord said, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost," and Paul said that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1. 16). But salvation from what? Not merely from the consequences of sin. Only in a limited sense does the gospel do this. Even after a man has given himself to Christ he may still suffer in his body and in human relationships the consequences of his past sins. But the gospel does offer a way of escape from the worst consequences of sin, namely, conformity to the likeness of sin and alienation from God. The gospel offers man salvation from *sin itself* and from all that hinders him from realizing his highest destiny as one who is called to be a child of God—salvation from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, from death to life, from alienation from God into reconciliation to God. Salvation has therefore a positive and not merely a negative meaning.

The gospel sets before us salvation not as something to be achieved merely by "rallying the good in the depths of ourselves," but as the gift and work of God. "By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2. 8). The grace of God may be defined as "his undeserved love which yearns over all men and seeks to bring them into holy and happy communion with himself." The idea of grace is carried a stage further when Paul says, "God is able to make all grace abound unto you, . . . that ye . . . may abound unto every good work" (2 Cor. 9. 8). Here grace is God's love energizing within us; it is synonymous with the operation of the Holy Spirit, and to Paul, the Spirit "meant the gracious power of God which evoked faith in Jesus as the crucified and risen Christ, and then mediated to the receptive, obedient life all that the Lord was and did for his own people."

Salvation is, therefore, not merely a moral reformation. It is the outcome of a response to the inward energizing of the Spirit of God. But it is none the less a moral process, for it cannot be accomplished without man's consent and co-operation, and yet even this consent is primarily of God, whose grace is already at work in our hearts inclining them

to himself. This is what is called *prevenient* grace.

The psychological process through which a man passes when he experiences salvation is called *conversion*. Of recent years psychologists have devoted considerable attention to the phenomena of conversion. They are agreed that it is an experience which cannot be dismissed as a hallucination, but must be treated seriously, and that it occurs in non-Christian as well as in Christian circles. It is necessary here to draw attention only to two points. It has been a matter of common observation that conversions appear to be of two types—sudden and gradual. But psychological analysis reveals the fact that "sudden" conversions are usually not as sudden as they appear to be. Behind and underlying the sudden crisis are reflective and emotional processes which have been preparing the way for the "sudden" intellectual illumination or liberation of the emotions or volitional act. Even a conversion so sudden as that of Saul of Tarsus must have had behind it a long process of reflection upon the inadequacy of Judaism as a way of salvation, and upon the new Prophet of Nazareth and his teaching, especially as brought home to him at the martyrdom of Stephen. Conversion takes place when psychological

processes of this kind, the nature of which we shall discuss under the heading "Experiences Leading Up to Conversion," are brought to a head, and the great act of surrender to Jesus Christ is made. This may take place suddenly and dramatically, or it may occur quietly, and the transition may pass almost as unnoticed by the converted man as his growth in stature.

The other point to which psychologists have drawn attention, of which note must be taken here, is that it has been observed that conversion takes place most frequently between the years of ten and twenty-five, and more often still between thirteen and seventeen. But it would be wrong to argue from this that conversion is a mere accompaniment of adolescence. What it means is that (as we should expect) the period of adolescence, when as yet the character is not rigidly fixed, but is more or less fluid, provides the most favorable conditions for the operation of the Divine Spirit, who seeks to fashion our personalities according to the Christian pattern.

I. The Human Side of Conversion

1. *Experiences Leading Up to Conversion.* Psychologists say that the preconversion stage is marked by the consciousness of a "divided

self." The self seems to be at war with the self. The problem is how to achieve unification. For many this inner disunity takes the form of *conviction of sin.* There was a time when theologians held that a sense of sin is the *necessary* and *universal* precondition of conversion. That it has been so in a great many cases is beyond dispute. But those who preach the gospel do not always find it easy to produce in their hearers a sense of sin. It is certain that it cannot be produced by mere argument, however cogent. Isaiah confessed, "I am a man of unclean lips," after he had seen the Lord (Isa. 6. 5). And there is a hint there for the Christian preacher. It is the vision of God in Christ which sooner or later will convict men of their sin. But as a matter of observation (as distinct from theory) it is difficult to deny that this experience in many cases comes later rather than sooner. Every minister knows men who have entered into a genuine experience of the new life in Christ without any previous deep conviction of sin. It seems to be a fact that in many cases a poignant sense of sin belongs to the higher ranges rather than to the beginning of the Christian life. It is the saint who calls himself the chief of sinners, the reason being that because his spiritual sensibilities are so awak-

ened and developed he knows how wide is the gulf between himself and Christ.

For some, conversion is preceded not by conviction of sin, but by a sense of nonattainment, a sense of futility. They are conscious of a "divided self." They see the ideal beckoning them on, but they are unable to attain. It is their sense of moral impotence rather than of moral corruption that brings them to a realization of their need of Christ.

2. *Repentance.* "Repent" is a word which was frequently used by our Lord as well as by John the Baptist. What does it mean? It is to change one's mind for the better; it is to attain to a new outlook on life in which God is central, so that we view our past sins with abhorrence and determine that for the future we will forsake them. To the man who has no deep conviction of sin, but is borne down by a sense of the futility of his life, repentance means such a change of outlook as makes him ashamed of his past futility, and determined that for the future there shall be a worthier purpose in his life. But repentance is not a purely "human" process. It is the Spirit of God who convicts us, whether of sin or of futility. That is why repentance is never a sorrow unto despair. It is shot through and through with hope. The man who repents

knows that there is possibility of amendment, and he resolves to realize that possibility.

3. *Faith.* Faith is a term which is used in many senses in the New Testament and out of it. The faith that is a precondition of Christian conversion is not mere intellectual assent to certain doctrines. It means an apprehension of Jesus Christ as the revealer of God and a confident surrender to him and trust in him. "The faith which saves us is such a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as leads us to rely on him alone as our Saviour, and binds us to him as our Lord and Master." But faith is not an attitude which is produced simply by an act of will. Here again the Holy Spirit is at work. As Paul said, "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12. 3).

II. The Divine Side of Conversion

It will be well to point out here that there is a certain artificiality in the attempt to analyze profound religious experiences and to set them in chronological order. To do so makes for clarity of thought, but we need to remember that processes which seem to us to follow one another may in reality be simultaneous. The effort to distinguish between the human and the divine aspects of conversion is

perhaps vain, since it is impossible to discover any movement of the soul Godward in which the Spirit of God himself is not at work. But there are certain doctrines descriptive of the work of the Spirit, and based mainly on Paul's teaching, which are classic in evangelical theology. These doctrines demand our consideration, and so long as they are regarded as an attempt to describe vital spiritual processes, and not as a mechanical "scheme" or "plan," they will help us to understand the psychological processes whereby the new life in Christ is realized.

1. *Justification.* The word which is translated "justify" in the New Testament (for example, Rom. 4. 5) is a legal term. It means not "to make righteous" but "to declare righteous," or "to treat as righteous." It is the verdict of acquittal and is tantamount to forgiveness. According to Paul, justification is *by faith,* and Luther declared that according as this doctrine is held a church stands or falls. The reformers distinguished between *imputed* righteousness and *imparted* or *infused* righteousness. They held that in the act of justification the righteousness of Christ is imputed to those who cast themselves upon God with faith in Christ and in his reconciling work. Perhaps the best way to express the doctrine in modern

terms is to say that when men cast themselves upon God, with a whole-hearted faith in and surrender to Jesus Christ, God looks upon them as "righteous." This is no legal fiction. God always looks on the best in us, and the process of becoming righteous has already begun in those who are linked to Christ, and that not by any work of theirs, but by the working of the Spirit of God. When God justifies us (that is, pardons and acquits us), he looks no longer on our sinful past, but views us as we are ideally and potentially "in Christ Jesus."

The Protestant doctrine is that justification is *by faith alone* and not by works. That is to say, we come into a right relation with God by simple faith in Christ, and not through any works of righteousness that we have done. It is a perversion of Protestant doctrine to represent it as teaching that works of righteousness are of no account. Protestant doctrine contends for the right order of thought and experience. If we come into a right relation with God and are inwardly renewed by the Spirit, we shall spontaneously bring forth works of righteousness, as the tree brings forth fruit. But meritorious works will never of themselves bring us into a right inner relation with God or into a state of inward renewal.

2. *Regeneration.* This is the term used to describe the birth in the believer of the new life in Christ through the inward energizing of the Spirit of God. The New Testament speaks of regeneration as a fact of experience, but does not explain it. Our Lord referred to it as a fact of experience in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3). The same idea occurs in other New Testament writings (1 John 5. 1; 2. 29; 3. 9). Peter speaks of "having been begotten again" (1 Pet. 1. 23), and Paul says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5. 17). He also expresses the same idea under the forms of *resurrection* (Rom. 6. 4f.; Col. 2. 13; Eph. 2. 5f.) and *renewal* (Eph. 4. 23f.).

Jesus Christ is central in the experience of the new birth. To be regenerated is to undergo a complete change of outlook and disposition and to become conscious of new springs of energy and power—all being due to the transforming power of love of Jesus Christ as that is engendered in us by the Holy Spirit. The fourth Evangelist records our Lord as saying, "Except a man be born anew, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God" (3. 3), and "Except a man be born" anew, "he cannot *enter* the kingdom of God" (3. 5). That is, moral insight and moral action both have their

source in the new birth. Unless a man has been quickened by the Spirit he cannot even discern the realm of ideas and sphere of life summed up in the expression "the kingdom of God." It is the Spirit too who gives him power to rise from lower universes of thought and desire and life to the "kingdom of God."

William James made a great deal of the distinction between the "once-born" and the "twice-born." "Some persons are born with an inner constitution which is harmonious and well-balanced from the outset. Their impulses are consistent with one another, their will follows without trouble the guidance of their intellect, their passions are not excessive and their lives are little haunted by regrets. Others are oppositely constituted." The former are the "once-born," the latter, when regenerated, are the twice-born. The two classes are easily recognizable, but it is a mistake to suppose that the "once-born" do not need and do not experience regeneration. They too, even though they seem to be "born good," need the quickening, enlightening, and strengthening energies of the Spirit of God. Because there is no sharp crisis in their inner life it does not follow that there is no activity of the Divine Spirit. "The kingdom of God cometh, not with observation" (Luke 17. 20).

3. *Adoption.* This doctrine is based upon an illustration used by Paul. "Ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8. 15). "God sent forth his Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4. 4f.).

Paul uses as an illustration the custom of adoption which was prevalent in the Roman world, according to which a stranger could become a member of a family as really as though he had been born into it. We have seen in a previous chapter that all men are potentially sons of God. By justification and adoption they know themselves to be born into the family of God. The doctrine of adoption is a valuable assertion of the great truth that no man is saved unto himself alone, but that his salvation has a social meaning since he is redeemed into a family or commonwealth of which Christ is Head. "Adoption is the legal term which Saint Paul borrowed from the Roman law to express the social phase of conversion, namely that a saved sinner is not only justified and regenerated, but actually incorporated into the family of God to share its fellowship and to share its destiny."

The above are the processes, so far as they can be analyzed, which underlie the great

experience of conversion. Conversion is in a real sense a miracle—a miracle of grace. There is no room for forgiveness in the realm of nature. Its inexorable law is "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But in the realm of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit breaks into the chain of moral cause and effect, cuts off the entail of the past, reverses the current of the stream, and makes of those who have obtained the forgiveness of sins "new creations."

III. The Consequences of Conversion

1. *Assurance.* The New Testament teaches that the redeemed can be certain of the forgiveness of their sins and of their sonship to God. This note of confident assurance is specially prominent in the writings of Paul. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Rom. 8. 16). The Reformers attached great emphasis to the doctrine of assurance. The members of the Council of Trent were divided on the subject, and stated that while we ought not to doubt the mercy of God, yet, owing to human infirmity, we may have "fear and apprehension." The Westminster Confession regards assurance as an ordinary gift of the Spirit to the believer, though he may have

"to wait long and contend with many difficulties before he be partaker of it"; but once gained it cannot be lost. John Wesley's greatest service to theology was the prominence which he gave to this doctrine in face of much opposition and misunderstanding. He took his stand on the Pauline doctrine of the witness of the Spirit. For Wesley assurance of sonship is not a mere deduction of the reason; neither is it simply a conclusion drawn from Scripture on the ground that the conditions of acceptance by God have been fulfilled. Assurance is a divinely begotten conviction. "The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out and I, even I, am reconciled to God. . . . The manner how the divine testimony is manifested to the heart I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it." Wesley, unlike the Calvinists, taught that this inward assurance may be lost. In his old age he did not hold that the enjoyment of the inward witness was necessary to salvation. He wrote, "When fifty years ago my brother Charles and I, in

the simplicity of our hearts, taught the people that, unless they knew their sins were forgiven, they were under the wrath and curse of God, I marvel they did not stone us."

But it is impossible to exaggerate the sense of joy and power which the experience of assurance brings to the Christian life. It is a mistake to suppose that the experience of assurance necessarily makes for pride or self-centeredness. On the contrary, it should emphasize the social aspects of personality, for one of the elements of first importance in assurance is the consciousness of incorporation into a new society, the society of the redeemed, of those who are consciously striving to live as sons of God.

2. *Sanctification.* Conversion is not the end but the beginning of the response to the gospel call; the justified and regenerated must press on after holiness of life. Evangelical Christians have sometimes forgotten this and have fallen into what is called *antinomianism.* This is the name given to the tendency to make light of the moral and spiritual demands of the gospel, because of the magnitude of the grace of God. It is the tendency against which Paul is protesting when he says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid" (Rom. 6. 1f.).

Our Lord prayed for his disciples, "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17. 17). Other passages which point the same way are: "Present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification" (Rom. 6. 19). "Follow after . . . the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12. 14). Sanctification is both positive and negative; it involves both holiness of life and deliverance from sin. It is progressive. It is not fully achieved in the hour of conversion, but is reached from stage to stage. "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3. 18). It is the fruit of the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Such marks of holiness as "love, joy, peace" are the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 55. 22f.).

This is the point at which Christian ethics might come in for discussion as a department of Christian theology. But it is important to point out that holiness, while it includes, is something more than obedience to the ethical demands of the gospel. This does not mean that Christian ethics may be ignored by the Christian theologian or preacher. On the contrary, there is no more urgent need than that Christian men should think out the ethical implications and applications of the

gospel. But holiness is something more than obedience to the stern law of Christian duty. The crucial element in the idea of holiness is not any philosophical or ethical theory, but the cultivation of the fruit of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The starting-point of the life of holiness is not so much a particular moral ideal or end as fellowship with the Spirit of Holiness, which is the Spirit of God and of Christ. Holiness is better described as "the fruit of the Spirit" than as the product of moral faithfulness.

3. *Christian Perfection.* Paul teaches the possibility of "perfection" in the present life. He uses the term "perfect" in a relative sense. The perfection which he has in mind is compatible with progress. In Phil. 3. 12, he says, "Not that I . . . am already made perfect; but I press on." Later on in verse fifteen of the same chapter he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." He is contemplating two different stages of perfection. But when he says that he proclaims Christ "that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Col. 1. 28), he is evidently thinking of the higher ranges of perfection. Paul uses expressions which make it difficult to evade the conclusion that he taught that it

is possible for the Christian to reach such a state of perfection that he does not willingly fall into any known sin. There is no suggestion here of freedom from liability to err in moral judgment, but such passages as the following undoubtedly point to such a state as has just been indicated. "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4. 13). "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5. 23).

The idea of perfection, under varying forms, has been present to the mind of the church at all periods of Christian history. In more recent times it was given a new prominence by John Wesley. His definition of a perfect Christian is "loving God with all our heart and mind and soul." The following is a summary of his teaching on the question.[1]

(1) The name which Wesley gives to the experience of holiness is "*Christian* perfection" or "*scriptural* perfection."

(2) Such perfection does not mean absolute perfection in conduct. Bodily infirmities often cause men to think, speak, or act wrongly.

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[1] I have followed in the main the analysis given by Professor O. A. Curtis, in *The Christian Faith*. The Methodist Book Concern.

(3) Nor does such perfection mean absolute perfection in *character*. The holier men become, the more do they feel "their own ignorance, littleness of grace, coming short of the full mind that was in Christ, and walking less accurately than they might have done after their Divine Pattern."

(4) Nor does such perfection mean freedom from actual *temptation*. "There is no such perfection in this life as implies an entire deliverance from actual temptations."

(5) Wesley avoided the phrase "sinless perfection."

(6) To be a perfect Christian is nothing other than being perfect in love toward God and man.

(7) This experience is achieved instantaneously. "I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a single act of faith; consequently in an instant. But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant." At the time of a man's conversion "the Holy Spirit sets before him 'the more excellent way' and incites him to walk therein, to choose the narrowest path in the narrow way, to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness—after the entire image of God. But if he does not accept this offer, he insensibly declines into the lower order of

Christians. He still goes on in what may be called a good way, serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the close of life through the blood of the covenant."

There is little in this summary to evoke dissent, save perhaps the suggestion that this experience is realized *instantaneously*. But it should not be overlooked that Wesley allows that the crisis is both preceded and followed by a process. And this teaching is psychologically sound. Psychological processes usually work up to a climax. It is not unreasonable to suppose that a man who has pondered long on the meaning of the Christian life and has had a deep experience of the grace of God should in one "hour of insight" become fully conscious of the might of the resources which the gospel places at his disposal, and should there and then will the task, which may be fulfilled through hours of temptation and struggle.

This is a part of its commission to which the church is not bearing adequate witness. There is need to sound anew the note that there are no limits to the possibilities of growth in the Christian life, and that Christians should not be satisfied with moral and spiritual mediocrity.

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY AND THE SACRAMENTS

The idea of the Holy Spirit as carrying on the work of Christ on earth demands, to complete it, the idea of the church. Christianity is based on an historical revelation. If this revelation is to be not merely a tradition attested by documentary evidence, but a living experience in the hearts of succeeding generations, there must be a community of witnesses who guard the traditions and experience the operations of the Spirit, who takes of the things that are Christ's and declares them. This community of witnesses is the church.

I. The Founding of the Church

Did our Lord found the church? The answer to this question depends on the meaning which we attach to the word "church." The word is attributed to our Lord only twice in the Gospels (Matt. 16. 8; 18. 17; this latter passage refers to the Jewish Church). We must be careful not to read into the word at this stage the sense which it acquired in subsequent ages. There are those who contend that our Lord gave to his disciples a definite form of

church organization, and that this organization is as essential a part of the gospel as what is known as the Christian faith. But the evidence which is adduced in support of this contention is very unconvincing. We should not expect that He who said that his words were "spirit and life" would legislate on questions of organization. His method was to gather disciples around him, to inspire and instruct them, and to equip them for the task of preaching the gospel. That some kind of organization would be necessary, he must have foreseen, but he left his disciples to shape their own organization according to needs and circumstances and as the Spirit should direct them. The New Testament throws some light upon the forms of organization which the early church assumed under the direction of the apostles, but if the church is (as we have contended) the organ of the indwelling Spirit, even these forms cannot be regarded as perpetually binding. The church must always be free to modify its organization to meet the needs of a changing world, according as she is led by the living Spirit of God.

II. The Development of the Idea of the Church in the New Testament

1. *The Church of the Earliest Days.* This is

described in the early chapters of the *Acts of the Apostles*. The organization is very simple. It was a fellowship of brethren who practiced a limited kind of communism (2. 45). "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (2. 42). At first membership of the church involved no break with Temple and synagogue. The church was of the nature of a society within Judaism (2. 46), as the early Methodists were originally a society within the Church of England. The leaders of the little community were the Twelve, and especially Peter (1. 15-26). They were, however, not dictators. When it was necessary to appoint new officers to serve tables, "the multitude of the disciples" were taken into consultation, and the appointment was made by them (6. 1-6). This incident makes clear that the organization was gradually developed in response to new needs and changing circumstances. The conditions of entrance into the new community were repentance, accompanied by baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (this implies faith in Christ) and followed by "the gift of the Holy Ghost" (2. 38).

2. *The Pauline Church.* This idea of the church underwent great and rapid develop-

ment owing to the missionary expansion under the leadership of the apostle Paul. This is described in the later chapters of *Acts* and in the Pauline Epistles. The church is the whole community of Christians or a part of it.

(1) The nucleus of the church was the congregation which met in a private house (Acts 12. 12; 20. 8, 20; 21. 18; Philem. 2; Col. 4. 15; Rom. 16. 5). The term "ecclesia" was applied to these separate congregations.

(2) *The City-Church.* In course of time it became impossible to accommodate in one house all the believers in a particular city. The result was that in some cities there were several house-congregations. There appear to have been held occasionally united meetings of all the congregations in a city (Acts 15. 30; 1 Cor. 5. 4; 14. 23; 1 Thess. 5. 27; Col. 4. 16; Rom. 6. 23). The group of house-churches in a city was called "ecclesia" (1 Cor. 1. 4).

(3) The term "ecclesia" is also applied to the *whole company of believers* "called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours" (1 Cor. 1. 2).

The whole church is regarded as functioning through each house-church.

(4) *The Ideal Church.* There are passages in which Paul seems to lose sight of the church

as it is and to think of it only as it is ideally. The ideal church is to judge the world (1 Cor. 6. 2); it is "the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3. 17). The conception of the ideal church is most highly developed in the *Epistle to the Ephesians*, where the metaphors of the Building, the Body, and the Bride are used to illustrate it.

There are five outstanding elements in the New Testament conception of the Church of Christ.[1]

(1) The Church is a *fellowship*—a fellowship with Christ and with the brethren.

(2) *It is a unity.* The unity is ideal rather than manifest and visible. But that does not mean that it is not real. Because the members of the church are united to Christ, their common Head, they are in a real sense united to one another by community of faith and experience and purpose. For the unity to be real, there is no necessity for it to be realized in one visible organization. This may be said without minimizing the injury wrought by "the unhappy divisions" of Christendom, for these arise even more from lack of unity of spirit than from differences of creed and organization. Our Lord's words in his High-Priestly

[1] Cf. Lindsay: *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries.* Chap. I.

prayer are frequently misinterpreted in this connection. "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (John 17. 21). Obviously, the unity here contemplated is unity of spirit rather than of external organization. Indeed, visible unity need not depend on unity of organization. There is room within the one Church of Christ for diversities of organization, each making its contribution to the life of the whole fellowship.

Organizations are likely to approximate to one another according as unity of spirit is achieved, and not vice-versa. Meanwhile it is not too much to say that visible unity would be an already realized fact if all the existing branches of the church could agree to practice intercommunion.

(3) *The church is a visible community.* There can be no doubt that in the New Testament the church is a visible community with a developing organization. It is not merely a mystic fellowship of those who share a common ideal. The ideal church of which Paul speaks may not yet have attained complete or perfect embodiment. But it becomes partially visible in and functions through each separate community of believers. These separate communities are welded into a unity according as

each is diligent "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4. 3).

(4) *The church has authority.* It has powers of oversight and discipline to be exercised upon its members. Above all, it has authority "to declare unto all men being penitent the absolution and remission of their sins through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

(5) *The church is a priestly society.* Hostility to the exaggerations of sacerdotalism should not blind us to the essential truth which it contains. The priest represents man to God and God to man. In this sense the church exercises priestly functions. But it is the whole church and not any particular caste within it. The New Testament teaches *the universal priesthood of all believers.* This does not preclude the church from setting men apart for the work of the ministry. But the minister is the agent and mouthpiece of the whole church, whether he is preaching the Word or administering the sacraments.

3. *Definitions of the Church.* In the light of the above considerations we may proceed to record some definitions of the church which harmonize with them.

"Wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church" (Ignatius, *Ad Smyrn.*, c. 8).

"Where the church is there is the Spirit of

God, and where the Spirit of God is there is the church and every kind of grace" (Irenæus, *Adv. Haeres*, III, 24).

"Accordingly, where there is no joint session of the ecclesiastical order, you offer, baptize, and are a priest alone for yourself, for where three are there the church is, although they be laity" (Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis*, 7).

"We believe that God wills fellowship. By God's own act this fellowship was made in and through Jesus Christ, and its life is in his Spirit. We believe that it is God's purpose to manifest this fellowship, so far as this world is concerned, in an outward visible and united Society, holding one faith, having its own recognized officers, using God-given means of grace, and inspiring all its members to the world-wide service of the kingdom of God. This is what we mean by the catholic church. The vision which rises before us is that of a church, genuinely catholic, loyal to all truth, and gathering into its fellowship all 'who profess and call themselves Christians,' within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole body of Christ. Within this unity Christian com-

munions now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled" (*Lambeth Resolutions*, 1920, I and IV).

4. *The Communion of Saints.* The term "saints" is used in this connection as applied in the New Testament to all the redeemed. The term has come to have a particular significance in reference to those who have departed this life. Death does not separate the redeemed from the church, because it does not separate them from Christ, the Head of the church. The church on earth is the *church militant*, the Church Above is the *church triumphant.* As Charles Wesley wrote:

"One family we dwell in Him,
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

The church has always held that there is a real communion between the redeemed on earth and the redeemed above. Because both are in fellowship with Christ, they are in a real sense in communion with one another.

5. *The Church and the Kingdom.* In the writings of Paul, the idea of the church largely takes the place of that of the kingdom of God which dominates the synoptic Gospels. The visible church is the kingdom in process of being realized and the invisible church is the ideal of the Kingdom. But Christian thought has always recognized a distinction between the two ideas, though it is not easily drawn.

(1) The church is the agent for the extension of the kingdom of God.

(2) The church becomes the model of the Kingdom insofar as it exemplifies the Christian spirit and way of life.

(3) The Kingdom includes those aspects of human life called "secular," insofar as they are baptized into the Spirit of Christ. These the church, as an organism, does not attempt to include.

(4) The ideal church is the perfected kingdom of God. When the church shall have gathered unto itself all who recognize themselves as God's children, and shall have baptized all institutions and relationships into the Christian spirit, then the kingdom of the world will have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

6. *Development of the Doctrine of the Church.* So long as the apostles lived the church was

able to function with a comparatively loosely knit organization. They were a center of authority and therefore a cementing influence. But when the apostles had passed away the need for authority became apparent, and the organization was tightened up. This process was hastened by the conflicts of the church with opposition from without and heresy from within. Gradually the church developed its defense along three lines: (1) *The Development of the Episcopal Office.* In the second century A. D. the supremacy of the bishop was established. The church's reply to the heretics was that all the genuine Christian traditions were known to the bishops, who were able to trace the line of their succession back to the apostles.

(2) *The Apostolic Creed.* The "Apostles' Creed" was known at Rome in its earliest form about 150 to 175 A. D.

(3) *The Apostolic Writings.* The authority of certain Apostolic writings was recognized in the second century A. D., and the canon of New Testament Scripture was beginning to shape itself.

These were held to be the credentials of the true church. Those who did not accept the authority of the apostolic creed and the apostolic writings, and who had not the authentic

episcopate, were outside the church. Here we have the germs out of which the Catholic Church developed. The word "catholic" means "universal." It was used of the whole church, as distinct from schismatic bodies, and gradually came to mean orthodoxy as opposed to heresy and conformity as opposed to dissent. By 200 A. D. the main lines of the organization of the Catholic Church were laid down.

Augustine came to regard the church as the sole sphere of salvation and as the sole mediator of divine truth and grace. There was, however, another side to his teaching, which fell into the background until the Reformation. He conceived of the church as spiritual and invisible, the congregation of the "elect" saints. This is a smaller body than the ecclesiastical body. The latter includes "tares" as well as wheat. The sacraments only convey grace to the elect and have no efficacy for the nonelect. These are two contradictory strains of teaching, but Augustine was a man of many-sided mind, and there is a sense in which it may be said that he is the source from which springs the stream of the Reformation as well as that of Roman Catholicism.

The Middle Ages saw the steady consoli-

dation of the Western Church as a hierarchical and authoritarian institution, through whose ministries and sacraments salvation could alone be found. The papacy consolidated its position. Both theologians and ecclesiastics were agreed in this policy. Hildebrand (Gregory VII, 1020–1085) claimed that the Pope was universal bishop with power to depose or reinstate all other bishops. He also claimed for the papacy supreme temporal authority, that is, that he had power to make or to unmake kings or emperors. He aimed at nothing less than a universal theocracy with the Pope at its head. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the great scholastic theologian, argued that there can be only one Christian Church, and that as each diocese requires one bishop for its head, so the whole Christian people needs one head for the whole church, that is, the Pope.

John Wyclif (1369–1415) and John Huss (1324–1381) raised opposing voices; their protest seemed of little avail at the time, but it was later made effective by the Reformers. Even in what might be called orthodox circles of the church the supremacy of the Pope was not universally admitted, and the Council of Constance (1414–1418) declared that General Councils have power derived directly from

Christ over the whole church, and that all, even Popes, are bound to obey them. We have traced here only the development of the doctrine of the church in the West. The final separation with the East came in 1054. It will be convenient to summarize later developments under three heads: (1) Reformers. (2) Roman Catholic. (3) Eastern.

1. *The Doctrine of the Reformers.* The reformers brought the idea of the church into close relation with that of the gospel. They found the church wherever the gospel is preached and the sacraments administered. The church is the communion of those who are united to Christ through the preaching of the gospel. The reformers will have nothing to do with the common conception of union with Christ through union with the church. The "power of the keys" is authority to proclaim the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. The church does not depend upon the clergy for its continuity, but upon the continued preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments. The clergy are simply the organs through whom the universal priesthood of believers functions. Because of the corruption of the church as it was, the Reformers emphasized the spiritual and invisible church—the ideal church of the Pauline

Epistles—the church to which all who have experienced the forgiveness of sins belong. But this did not mean that they denied the reality of the visible church. This exists wherever the Word is truly preached and the sacraments are duly administered and there is a sincere effort after holy living. The visible church is an imperfect manifestation of the invisible church. But the reformers held that the unity of the visible church is to be realized in unity of spirit and not necessarily in unity of external organization. These ideas, variously expressed, underlie the theology of all the Protestant churches.

2. *The Roman Catholic Doctrine of the Church.* This is based on the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and of the Vatican Council (1870). It is substantially the same as that of mediæval times. The most notable development is the formal assertion of papal infallibility at the Vatican Council, though it held that this was implicit in earlier belief and teaching. The church is regarded as a complete, permanent, and ordered society, "a body of men united together for the profession of the same Christian faith and by participation in the same sacraments, under the governance of lawful pastors, more especially of the Roman Pontiff, the sole vicar of Christ

on earth." This definition rules out multiplicity of churches and a variety of ministers. By "lawful" pastors is meant those who are in the apostolical succession. The bishops in this succession are not merely duly ordered officers, but channels of grace. The Vatican Council, 1870, asserted the supreme jurisdiction of the Pope over the whole church "not only in things which pertain to faith and morals, but also to the governance and order of the church scattered over the whole world," and that the Roman Pontiff "when he speaks *ex cathedra* is endowed with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that his church should be instructed in the defining of doctrine as touching both faith and morals: and that on this account the definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves—and not by virtue of the consent of the church—irrevocable."

The claim that the church is pre-eminent over the state is now interpreted to mean that where duties conflict "God is to be obeyed rather than man." But if the voice of the Pope is synonymous with that of God, even such a simple statement may have mischievous implications.

The doctrine that "outside the church there is no salvation" is modified by the admission

that "those who without fault of their own are not members of the body of the church may nevertheless belong to its soul, provided they seek to know the truth, possess faith and charity, and are contrite for the sins they have committed."

3. *The Eastern Doctrine of the Church.* "The Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of the East" consists of fourteen autonomous churches, which have a common faith, government, and basis of worship." "She is called *Eastern* because she is geographically the antithesis of the West of which Rome is the center. She is called *Apostolic* as having been founded by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word and having received through them the seed of the gospel; for, indeed, the Orthodox Eastern Church, by means of an uninterrupted heirarchical chain, has her roots in the very foundations of theophany." She is called *Orthodox* because she claims that she is the depositary of true doctrine, as opposed to the aberrations of Rome. She is called "Catholic" because she is not limited to any place or time or people, but contains true believers of all places, times and peoples. The "Orthodox" doctrines of the church may be gathered from the following quotation from its official Catechism (1839):

"The church is a divinely instituted community of men, united by the orthodox faith, the law of God, the hierarchy and the sacraments." "The church, though visible so far as she is upon earth, still is at the same time invisible so far as she is also partially in heaven, and contains all those who have departed hence in the true faith and holiness." There is unity between the church on earth and the church in heaven "by their common relation to one Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by mutual communion with one another." The Orthodox Church alone "has the sublime promises that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her and that the Lord shall be with her even to the end of the world." "We undoubtedly express as sure truth that the Catholic Church cannot sin, or err, or utter falsehood in place of truth; for the Holy Ghost, ever working through his faithful ministers, the fathers and doctors of the church, preserves her from all error." The hierarchy of the Orthodox Church proceeds "from Jesus Christ himself, and from the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles; from which time it is continued, in unbroken succession, through the laying on of hands in the sacrament of orders." The one body whose authority is supreme over the whole church is an ecumen-

ical council; that is, a council representing the whole church. General councils cannot err.

III. The Ministry

By the Christian ministry is meant the body of officers duly recognized and authorized for the fulfillment of certain functions, such as ministering the Word and the sacraments, the spiritual oversight of the flock of Christ, and the administration of its temporal affairs.

1. *The Perpetuation of the Christian Ministry.* Did our Lord establish and provide for the perpetuation of the Christian ministry? We have already expressed the opinion that our Lord prepared his disciples to carry on his work when he should be taken from them, but that he left the interests of his kingdom in the hands of a "band of brothers" rather than in those of a fixed organization. If that was the case, we should expect that, while the apostles would naturally take the lead in the teaching and government and extension of the infant church, there would as yet be no universally binding rules of church government and therefore no official and legal ministry. About this there is much controversy.

2. *Two Conflicting Views.* On the one hand "Catholics" (Roman, Eastern, and Anglican) contend that even before Pentecost there

existed officers in the Christian Society appointed by Christ and put in trust of the ministry of the Word of grace as a whole. These were the apostles. They in due time appointed their successors, and the practice has been continued through an unbroken line of bishops to the present day. This is what is called the doctrine of the *apostolical succession*, which, according to Bishop Gore, "must be reckoned with as a permanent and essential element of Christianity." On the other hand the Protestant churches contend that Christ did not lay down rules for an organization, that the authority and influence of the apostles sprang naturally out of the fact that they had been personal companions of the Lord, that the church gradually developed the ministry in accordance with its growing needs, that the doctrine of the apostolic succession is, as John Wesley said, "a fable," and that there is a valid, real, and regular ministry of the Word and the sacraments, when men give themselves to the work of the ministry in response to the inward call of the Spirit, as that is attested by the church. The minister, so called and attested, is held to be the representative or agent, acting on behalf of the whole priesthood of believers. His functions are delegated functions.

3. *The Ministry in the New Testament.* The most important point to be noted is that in the New Testament the essential qualification for the ministry is to be "filled with the Spirit." We are not to conceive of each local church as having a minister in charge of it from the beginning. The early assemblies for worship were not unlike a Quaker meeting or a Methodist class-meeting, where each speaks as the Spirit moves him. Insofar as there was an official ministry, we can distinguish two classes of ministers: (1) Those who gave themselves to the ministry of the Word, (2) Those who gave themselves to practical administration, called "serving tables," for example, the seven deacons (Acts 6. 1-6), but even these must be men "full of the Spirit." Those who gave themselves to the ministry of the Word may be called the *prophetic ministry.* This included three classes: (1) Apostles; (2) Prophets; (3) Teachers.

(1) Apostles: Their distinguishing characteristic was that they had dedicated their lives to missionary preaching. They were not appointed to an office, but to a work. The term "apostle" was not limited to the eleven; it was applied to Paul and to many others (for example, Barnabas, Acts 14. 14; see also 2 Cor. 8. 23) who were conscious of the inward

call of the Spirit to a life of missionary service. The apostles are not represented as having any *official* authority. The eleven, of course, had a unique influence and authority because they had known Christ after the flesh. A similar authority attached to Paul, both because of his outstanding spiritual experience and of his personal gifts. It may be said, indeed, that even those who were numbered among the apostles in the wider sense of the word exercised a considerable authority over the churches which they founded, but this authority was *personal* and not *official.* And probably, in most cases, as in that of Paul, that authority was only exercised insofar as it carried with it the assent and consent of the community.

(2) *Prophets.* The prophets were "Spirit-filled" men who proclaimed and interpreted the "Word of God" as the Spirit gave them utterance. The prophet did not break new ground. He found his sphere of service within the Christian communities established by the apostles. The prophet was not a mere teacher who expounded the oracles of the Lord. He was a man of insight and intuition, of magnetic personality, who brought the new truth into relation with the old, and applied it to the needs of his hearers. Prophets were not

office-bearers in the church, though it might happen that an office-bearer might also be a prophet. They were not ordained to their work. They were men who had responded to the call of the Spirit and were recognized by the Christian communities as having the gift of prophesying, to which they laid claim. They, like the apostles, inevitably exercised a considerable personal authority over the early Christian communities.

(3) *Teachers.* They were not necessarily office-bearers. Primarily they were men who had received from the Spirit the gift of instructing. They were repositories of the oral traditions of the teaching of Jesus and it was their task to impart to their fellow believers a knowledge of the truths of the gospel. We are not to suppose that these men were *appointed* to the office of teaching. What happened was that men who found themselves possessed of the gift exercised it with the tacit approval of their fellow believers.

Apostles, prophets, and teachers all exercised an *itinerant* ministry. In the nature of things there grew up also a *localized* ministry, concerned mainly with questions of administration. We can see the beginnings of this local ministry in the New Testament. There were two main classes of officials—presbyters, or

elders (sometimes called bishops), and deacons. The *elders* had the oversight of public worship and the care of the philanthropies of the church. They were the guardians of the church's orthodoxy both in faith and in morals, and it was their business to arbitrate when disputes arose between Christians. But the elders did not take complete control of public worship as does a minister to-day. The congregation itself took charge of praise and prayer, and even of the preaching, unless there should happen to be a prophet or teacher present. *Deacons* acted under the superintendence of the elders, and found their chief sphere of service in the philanthropic work of the church.

These local ministers were set apart to their office by the laying on of hands. Later on, some of the Fathers held that the gift of the Spirit was imparted through the act of laying on of hands. But the rite, which was taken over from Judaism, was not originally held to have any such significance. It was simply the expressive and familiar sign of benediction, inherited by the apostles from the synagogue and adapted to the service of the church.

4. *Development of the Doctrine of the Ministry.* The spread of Christianity, the passing away of apostles and eyewitnesses, the growth of independence of the local churches, and the rise

of heresy led inevitably to the strengthening of the local ministry. The church had reached that stage in its development when, in the interests of unity and consolidation, the need of rulers appeared to be greater than that of prophets. The result was that the old prophetic ministry declined in influence and became subordinate to the local ministry. We have seen that, when confronted with schism and heresy, the church replied that the only authentic traditions of the gospel were attested by those officers (bishops) who could show that they stood in an unbroken succession from the days of the apostles. These officers were therefore regarded as the guardians and the judges of orthodoxy, and this put the prophets in a position of subordination.

Toward the beginning of the second century we find that each Christian community has a threefold ministry. The term "bishop" is no longer synonymous with "elder," or, rather, he is the presiding elder. He now occupies a distinct office as the pastor of the church. Associated with him but under him are *elders* and *deacons*, with their own differing functions. In the letters of Ignatius (about 110) the bishop is given an exalted position, although the conception of his office is not yet sacerdotal. By the end of the second century the

supremacy of the bishop was universally established and recognized, and by this time there was attached to his office the ministry of the Word as well as the administration of the sacraments and the affairs of the Christian community.

The congregation elected its own bishop, the ordination being usually carried out by a neighboring bishop with the assistance of the elders, though it might be done by one of the elders of the congregation. The bishop acted in all respects as pastor of the flock. He presided at the Lord's Supper, but could delegate these functions to an elder. The growing need for discipline within the church in face of persecution and the need for presenting a united front to the empire combined to consolidate the position and power of the episcopacy.

In the third century Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (died 258), asserted the doctrine of the apostolical succession in a very uncompromising form. According to him, episcopacy is in no sense derived from the Christian community. It is received from heaven, being transmitted from God to Christ and from Christ to the apostles and from the apostles to the bishops, their successors. They are therefore responsible only to God. The bishop

is necessary to the church, and where there is no bishop there is no church. The unity of the whole church is guaranteed by the communion of the bishops with one another. It follows from this that the body of bishops constitutes the essence of the church.

5. *Reformation Doctrine of the Ministry.* Luther held that the ministry of the gospel is not a priesthood, in the sense that the minister's functions are independent of those of the universal priesthood of believers; but an *office* of the church for the administration of the Word and the sacraments. In fulfilling these functions ministers are the representatives or executive officers of the whole congregation, and through the congregation of Christ who has called them.

The same position was taken by Calvin. He held that the right to set apart as its minister any man whom it approved as being called of God belonged to each congregation. His chief contribution was to restore to the laity a function in church government which they had not held since the first century. He gave them a place of equal authority with the clergy in church courts, and laid the foundations of that happy co-operation which exists in most evangelical churches today.

6. *The Evangelical Doctrine of the Ministry.*

There is no authoritative doctrine of the ministry held in common by the evangelical churches, but the following beliefs have the authority of widespread conviction:

(1) The first essential for the work of the ministry is that a man feel himself inwardly called thereto by the Spirit of God.

(2) If he is to exercise his ministry in a particular church, he must be approved by the duly constituted church courts.

(3) While sacerdotal authority is disclaimed, it is held that as *a matter of order*, there shall be committed to the minister sufficient authority for the discharge of his special functions.

(4) A high doctrine of the ministry is quite compatible with the disavowal of sacerdotal claims. The minister discharges a priestly office as the representative of his fellow members of the universal priesthood of believers. While he is approved and authorized by his fellow members to minister in his own communion, yet his authority to minister the Word and sacraments is not derived from them, but from Him who called him to be an ambassador, beseeching men on behalf of Christ.

IV. The Sacraments

A sacrament is sometimes defined as "an

outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." It may be any outward medium through which we apprehend unseen realities. This is the meaning of the saying that all nature and all life may be sacramental. But in church usage the word has a narrower meaning, and is used of rites which are supposed to have a particular value for the apprehension of the unseen through sensible forms. The Roman and Greek Churches recognize seven—baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, marriage. The reformers recognized only two—those held to be directly instituted by our Lord—baptism and the Lord's Supper, and their teaching has been followed by the Protestant churches, with the exception of the Quakers, who recognize no sacraments at all, or, rather, would say that all life may be made sacramental. It may be pointed out, however, that the preaching of the Word equally fulfills the conditions of the definition. Spoken words, no less than rites and symbols, may be a means of conveying grace and of apprehending the unseen.

1. *Baptism.* (1) *Did Our Lord Institute Baptism?* No one, of course, contends that our Lord originated the rite of baptism. It was observed by John the Baptist. Ceremonial

cleansing with water was an idea familiar to Judaism, and, indeed, proselytes were admitted into the Jewish Church by baptism. The question before us is, Did our Lord lay hold of this rite and enjoin it on his followers with a significance of its own? The answer can hardly fail to be in the affirmative. To most Christians Matt. 28. 19 would seem to be conclusive, but some scholars contend (on insufficient grounds, as it seems to the present writer) that the words are a later interpolation and therefore not an authentic word of Jesus. But without entering into this particular controversy, we may ask, how did baptism establish itself so firmly in the early church, if not instituted by Christ? It seems to have been the universal practice of the church from the first days, and even Paul, who says that he was sent, not to baptize, never seems to have challenged it as the rite of initiation into the Christian Church. There is no sign of any controversy on the subject in the early church, nor is it known that there was any Christian community in which baptism was not the rule. The conclusion seems inevitable, therefore, that behind the rite was the authority of Christ.

(2) *The Significance of Baptism in the New Testament.* In the New Testament, and par-

ticularly in the Pauline writings, baptism is represented as the sacrament of regeneration. It has been asserted by some that Paul attached a magical significance to baptism; that is, that it was not only a symbol of inward cleansing, but actually produced this inner change. But there is no adequate ground for this contention. To Paul baptism was the sign and the symbol of an inner spiritual process brought to pass by faith in Christ. Because baptism was the outward sign of the believer's incorporation into the community of believers, it became inseparable in thought from his experience of regeneration. But "salvation is made to hang, not on participation in any sacrament, but on the Word of God, received in faith."

(3) *The Persons Baptized.* As baptism was the sign of initiation into the Christian community, following on repentance and the conscious acceptance of Christ, it was in New Testament times administered only to adults, by immersion. Infant baptism does not seem to have come into use till the second century. Until parents were brought to Christ and Christian homes were formed, there was no room for infant baptism, except on the theory that the rite had a magical efficacy.

(4) *Development of the Doctrine of Baptism.*

Sacramentarian ideas seem to have found their way into the church at a very early date (Acts 22. 16; 1 Cor. 15. 29). This was probably due to the influence of the mystery religions, of which ablutions were a conspicuous feature, such lustrations being in themselves a means of regeneration. Gentiles converted to Christianity could hardly fail to color their new beliefs with those in which they had been brought up. This is, of course, not to assert that their ideas were deliberately introduced into Christianity by men of such spiritual insight as the first apostles. Paul's emphasis on faith and moral renewal shows that he combated magical ideas of baptism with all his power. At any rate, whether derived from the mystery religions or from some other source, by the end of the second century mechanical notions of baptism had gained considerable ground. It was held that the rite of baptism brought forgiveness of sin, regeneration, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is not to be assumed that all church teachers were blind to the perils of magical ideas; on the contrary, they emphasized the moral requirements of the gospel.

Infant baptism is first mentioned by Irenæus (died 202), and was usually held to cleanse from original sin. It came to be believed that un-

baptized infants are excluded from heaven. Augustine, in his later period, made baptism absolutely necessary to salvation. Infants who die without being baptized "will be involved in condemnation, but of the mildest character." The whole tendency of Augustine was to emphasize the intrinsic efficacy of the ritual act. During the Middle Ages sprinkling was substituted for immersion in the West. The Roman Catholic doctrine of baptism is built on the foundation laid by Augustine. Baptism is not merely a sign of spiritual grace—it is an effectual cause of it. The Council of Trent decreed that the guilt of original sin is removed by baptism, that there is no salvation without baptism, and that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification (that is, sanctification).

For the reformers the sacraments ceased to be central. They are simply one means of grace among others. To Luther the sacraments are but a peculiar form of the saving word of God, and Calvin places the sacraments in the same category as prayer, the study of the Scriptures, and preaching. The reformers did not, therefore, regard the sacraments as communicating a grace that could not be otherwise mediated; that is, they did not regard any sacrament as necessary to salvation.

The leaders of the Reformation, however, differed in their interpretation of the meaning of baptism. The Lutherans took it to mean regeneration. The Zwinglians interpreted it merely as a recognition of discipleship. The Calvinists took a mediating view, and held that baptism is not merely a sign of grace, but in some respects an actual gift of grace.

(5) *The Modern Protestant View of the Significance of Baptism.* There are many varieties of view within the various churches which practice infant baptism, but most would agree that the following elements are present in baptism:

(*a*) The parents dedicate their child to Christ and to his church and vow to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This means that they also dedicate themselves.

(*b*) The church which witnesses the rite and receives the child "into the congregation of Christ's flock" solemnly undertakes the responsibility of caring for the child in the years to come.

(*c*) Many hold the Calvinistic view that in baptism an actual gift of grace is imparted to the child—a gift which becomes effective in later years. Many others, however, hold that the rite does but symbolize the grace which God will give to the child.

(*d*) In later years it is a means of conscious

blessing to the baptized child to remember the sacrament of his initiation into the visible church, and to recall the vows made by his parents on his behalf.

2. The Lord's Supper. (1) *Did Our Lord Institute "The Lord's Supper"?* There can be no doubt that our Lord instituted a rite at his last supper with his disciples. But what rite? Because he instituted the Supper it does not follow that all the meanings which have been read into that rite were intended by him. It is difficult to see how the "mass" can establish its claim to legitimate descent from the upper room. There are four accounts of the institution of the Supper in the New Testament—Matt. 26. 26-29; Mark 14. 22-25; Luke 22. 17-20; 1 Cor. 11. 23-26. There is no reference to the institution of the rite in the fourth Gospel. It is held by many, however, that John 6 is to be interpreted in the light of the Supper. This chapter certainly moves in the same circle of ideas, but there is no record of the historical institution of a rite. The chapter is an illustration of "mysticism without sacrament."

It is a fair presumption that the rite which Christ instituted should be interpreted in the light of the Supper and of the words of institution as recorded by the evangelists and Paul,

and not in the light of sacramentarian ideas which entered the church at a later date. The conclusions which we draw from the narrative are that the Supper was instituted by our Lord and intended by him to be repeated. The present writer does not think that our Lord imposed the rite on his disciples as a legal ordinance, but, rather, that the institution of the rite, with the command to perpetuate it, is to be regarded as the appointment of a trysting place. If the "Catholic" contention were true—that this rite is the most crucial and essential thing in the Gospel —we should expect it to occupy a very prominent place in the New Testament; whereas it is not mentioned by any of the New Testament writers except the synoptists and Paul. And even Paul does not regard it as of the essence of the faith. "Of the sacraments he might have said what he said of circumcision, that neither their observance nor their non-observance avails anything, but faith working through love."[1]

(2) *The Significance of the Lord's Supper in the Institution-Narratives.* (*a*) It was meant to be a perpetual commemoration of Christ's sacrificial death.

(*b*) It was intended to be a means of com-

[1] Morgan: *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, p. 227.

munion, and it has therefore fittingly come to be called the *Holy Communion*. Through this rite the disciples were to experience real fellowship with their Lord. The bread and wine were taken as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. The rite was a dramatic representation of the life of union with Christ. Further, the Supper was conceived as the covenant-meal of the new dispensation, in which, as in other covenant-meals, fellowship was established between the members of the covenant and their Head, and also with one another.

(*c*) It was a pledge that Christ would come again, and the sacramental experience was a foretaste of a fuller and deeper fellowship with Christ in his consummated kingdom.

(3) *Development of the Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*. It seems certain that the Lord's Supper was celebrated by all the churches of the apostolic age. What significance did they attach to it? The question is not easy to answer, as there was then no clearly formulated theory. Certain ideas were associated with the rite—the strengthening of the soul against sin, the commemoration of the sacrificial death of Christ, the unity in Christ of all who partook of the rite, thankfulness for the fruits of the earth, the hope of immortality. Very

soon ideas crept in from Jewish or pagan sources, which in course of time entirely transformed the meaning of the simple rite of the upper room. These ideas arose out of prevailing conceptions of sacrifice and out of the notion that certain ritual acts of themselves conveyed grace, apart from the disposition of the participant. At an early date the term "sacrifice" was applied to the Supper, which had now come to be called the *Eucharist* (that is, "thanksgiving"). It is a thank-offering of the first-fruits of the earth. At this stage the sacrifice is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Gradually the idea gained ground that the material elements of bread and wine, while symbols, were also something more, and in the fourth century the idea emerged of a change in the elements on consecration. The Eucharist now came to be spoken of as a sacrifice offered by the priest. The sacrificial idea is transferred from the service as a whole to the consecrated elements. The sacramental sacrifice is a repetition of the sacrifice of the cross. In the sixth century the Eucharist is called "a sacrifice of propitiation and praise." In 844 Paschasius wrote a treatise in which he contended that the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ. The term

"transubstantiation" was first used by Hildebrand of Tours (early in twelfth century).

The Lateran Council (1215) affirmed "His body and blood are really contained in the sacrament of the altar under the species of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into the body and the wine into the blood by the power of God." This has remained the doctrine of the Roman Church. According to the Council of Trent, "If anyone shall deny that in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist there is contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood along with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the whole Christ, but shall say that the Presence is symbolical or is a figure, let him be anathema." At the Council of Florence (1439) the doctrine of transubstantiation had been accepted by representatives of the Eastern Churches as well as by those of the West. Roman Catholics resent the suggestion that the doctrine of transubstantiation means that the communicant eats and drinks the flesh and blood of Christ *physically*. They make much of the scholastic distinction between *substance* and *accidents*. Substance is that which exists in itself and is a support for the accidents, which are the qualities of matter (for example, color,

taste, etc.). Underlying the bread and the wine is a mysterious something called substance, and it is this which is changed into the flesh and blood of Christ. The accidents remain unchanged. The following statement of the doctrine was approved by Cardinal Newman as being in harmony with official Roman pronouncements: "According to this doctrine the substance of the bread and wine is converted into the substance of the very flesh and blood of Christ, so that all communicants literally and substantially partake of his flesh and blood."

(4) *The Doctrine of the Reformers.* The doctrine of the reformers as to the Lord's Supper took three main directions:

(*a*) *The teaching of Luther* repudiated the Roman doctrine of the mass, but attached great importance to the Eucharist. His doctrine of the elements is known as *consubstantiation.* The bread and wine remain bread and wine, but after the consecration the actual flesh and blood of Christ coexist in and with the bread and wine, just as a heated iron bar still remains an iron bar, though a new element, heat, co-exists in and with it. This connection is not permanent, but pertains only to the act of communion. Luther did not strengthen his view by associating with

it a doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body.

(*b*) *The Teaching of Zwingli.* Zwingli regarded the Eucharist as a memorial of our Lord's death, the bread and wine being signs of the broken body and shed blood; and also as an act of renewed union with Christ (who is spiritually present), through faith, bread and wine being seals of this union. The type of thought which regards the Supper as a purely commemorative rite is commonly called Zwinglian. This does not do justice to Zwingli.

(*c*) *The Teaching of Calvin.* Calvin emphasized the idea of the real spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The bread and wine are signs of the body and blood of Christ, but they are not mere signs, they are instrumental means of his presence. Because Christ is present in the Eucharist it is a means for deepening our union with him.

Most of the Protestant churches hold to one or other of these three types of doctrine (especially *b* and *c*). It may be worth noting that some Anglo-Catholics have developed the view that after consecration "an extension of the incarnation" takes place in the elements, which seems to be a revival of the mediæval theory of *impanation;* that is, that Christ

unites himself to the elements as he did to man at the incarnation.

(5) *Evangelical Doctrine of the Lord's Supper.* There is no authoritative doctrine held by all the evangelical churches, but the following statements would be widely accepted:

1. The Supper is a memorial of our Lord's dying on our behalf.

2. It is a *sacramentum*—the renewal of the Christian soldier's oath of allegiance to his Master and Lord.

3. It is the feast of the Holy Communion. Christ is really present in spiritual form and is apprehended by faith. Dr. G. G. Findlay used to say that the Lord's Supper is the trysting-place of the Lover and the beloved. The life of union with Christ is represented dramatically and symbolically by the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, and as we apprehend our Lord who is really present, so does our union with him deepen.

4. The Supper has a social significance. All social and other distinctions fall away among those who are guests at the Lord's Table, and those who are Christ's enter into fellowship with one another, as well as with their Lord. In the Holy Supper we have a foretaste of a redeemed society.

5. It is a pledge that our Lord will come again to consummate his kingdom.

"O blessed hope! with this elate,
Let not our hearts be desolate,
But strong in faith, in patience wait
Until He come."

CHAPTER XI

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

THE subject of eschatology (by which is meant doctrines which relate to the destiny of man after death, or "at the end of the world") is one for a volume rather than a chapter. Nothing is possible here beyond a mere outline of biblical teaching. Inevitably, some statements will have to be made without adequate explanation and there will be an appearance of dogmatism.

In the Old Testament, up to the time of Jeremiah, moral responsibility is, in the main, attached to the family and to the nation rather than to the individual. So long as the family and nation had this prominence, the consequences of righteousness and sin were thought of in terms of the present life only, in the prosperity or disaster which overtook the family or nation concerned. All men, without distinction, were thought of as passing to an underworld called Sheol. It was a place of subsistence rather than of existence (Isa. 14. 9-12), and there was no redemption from it. At length the hope of individual immortality found expression in Job (14. 14f.;

19. 25-27), and more confident expression in Psalms (49 and 73). In these two psalms, Sheol is the eternal abode of the wicked only. The hope of a blessed life for the individual beyond the grave was developed out of the new sense of the value of the individual soul in the sight of God, engendered by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The hope of immortality thus arose in Israel as the result of the experience of individual *fellowship with God.* "I am continually with thee:

> "Thou hast holden my right hand.
> Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
> And afterward receive me to glory"
> (Psa. 73. 23f.).

But side by side with this, a national hope was being developed, that of the Messianic kingdom. The great prophets looked forward to a time when the glories of the kingdom of David would be renewed on earth. These prophets expected the Gentiles to have some share in the Messianic kingdom, but Old Testament thought after the Exile tended to exclude the Gentiles. Ultimately the conception was reached that Israel's righteous dead would rise to share in this kingdom on earth (Isa. 24-27). Daniel (12. 2) goes further

and looks for the resurrection of both good and evil; but as he speaks of "many" it would appear that he did not hope for a universal resurrection.

It is not, however, in the Old Testament, but in Jewish literature called apocalyptic (from about 200 B. C.) that we find the most important developments of both the individual and the national hope. New Testament teaching on the "Last Things" is set in an apocalyptic framework. We must therefore outline briefly apocalyptic teaching on this subject.

The apocalyptists conceived of the Messianic era as a golden age, physically as well as morally and spiritually. The idea of the Messianic kingdom was gradually purged of materialistic associations. If its center was to be Jerusalem, it was to be a New Jerusalem. If it was to be everlasting on the earth, it was to be a renovated earth. In the first century B. C. the hope of an *eternal* kingdom of God *on the present earth* was abandoned. Henceforth the Messianic age is but a preparation for the era which is to dawn at the consummation of all things. The era up to the end of the Messianic age is called the *Present Age;* that which dawns after the consummation of all things is called the *Age to Come.* Usually the Messianic age is preceded

be a great assize, or by a chastisement of the Gentiles, but occasionally it is conceived of as coming gradually. Sometimes the judgment which precedes the dawn of the Messianic era is the Final Judgment. In other cases the Final Judgment does not come till the end of the Messianic age, the preceding judgment only determining who shall share the Messianic joys and glories. There is no uniformity of teaching as to *resurrection* and *immortality*. Most writers anticipate a resurrection at the beginning of the Messianic age. Some teach the resurrection of all men, some of all Israel, some of righteous Israel, and some are indefinite. In very few cases are the blessings of the Messianic age regarded as being reserved for Israel alone. But even when the wider outlook is taken, the main interest is in the vindication of Israel.

In this period and in this literature *Sheol* and *Gehenna* became in part equivalent terms. The term "Gehenna" is derived from the Valley of Hinnom (Josh. 18. 16; Neh. 11. 30). This valley became notorious because of its association with idolatrous rites, for example, the passing of children through the fires of Moloch (Jer. 7. 31; 32. 35; 2 Chron. 28. 3; 33. 6). It is thought by some scholars that perpetual fires were kept burning in this

valley for consuming dead bodies of criminals and carcasses of animals and the refuse of the city. In any case it was a place of fire, whether the fires of Moloch or those for consuming refuse, etc. "Gehenna" came to signify *a place of corporal and spiritual punishment for all the wicked in the presence of the righteous.* "And then shall the pit of torment appear . . . The furnace of Gehenna shall be made manifest" (2 Esdras 7. 36).

The New Testament writers use the apocalyptic framework, but it may be doubted whether to them it is anything more than framework. They give to the old ideas a deeper meaning and content, and the difficulty which besets the expositor is to discover what exactly that meaning is. Our Lord, for instance, uses the symbolism of the Kingdom which is to be inaugurated by the coming of the Son of man on the clouds of heaven. He spoke of the *Present Age,* and of the *Age to Come.* He used the Gehenna symbol. But we cannot always be quite certain how this imagery is to be interpreted. For instance, when he speaks of the Kingdom, we cannot always be sure whether he is speaking of the temporary Messianic kingdom or of the eternal kingdom in the heavens.

The New Testament does not develop any

argument in support of the belief in what is called the natural *immortality of the soul.* It is always assumed that the soul survives death. Our Lord's own position is made quite clear in Luke 20. 37ff. "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, . . . when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him."

But our Lord and the New Testament writers are not so much concerned with the mere fact of survival, which in itself is not of great importance, as with the quality of the life to be lived after death. They do not seem to attach any value to life beyond the grave unless it is lived in the presence of God and in fellowship with him. It is described as life "in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13. 43), or "with Christ" (Phil. 1. 23). The expression "eternal life," which occurs most frequently in the Gospel and epistles of John, does not signify simply everlasting life. It has reference to the quality of the life. It is a life which derives its quality from the relation in which the soul stands to God. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17. 3). But

while it may be true that the soul is naturally immortal, it is not all who inherit eternal life. There are moral conditions (Rom. 2. 6; 2 Cor. 5. 10), the fulfillment of which depends on the soul's relation to Jesus Christ (Matt. 25. 35f.; 1 John 5. 12).

I. Judgment

Judgment is a reality. The witness of the New Testament is plain. Christian theology cannot be emptied of this element without the perversion of the teaching of our Lord and of the apostles. While the spectacular dress given in some passages to the Final Judgment may be symbolic, there is still a Final Judgment. We cannot fail to note in the teaching of our Lord "the continual prophecy of a decisive separation of the heirs of the Kingdom from the rest of humanity. The King is constantly depicted as closing the gates of the city against those who are without, being deaf to all appeals, all entreaties, all knocking at the door (Matt. 25. 1-12). This note of exclusion is so dominant as to suggest a most solemn thought in the mind of Jesus. It belongs to a minor strain which is heard in the voice of our Lord—a sadness of foreboding, a stern perception of ominous possibilities. There is a broad and easy way that leads to

destruction (Matt. 7. 13f.); it profits a man nothing if he gain the whole world and lose his own life (Matt. 16. 26); it had been well for Judas if he had never been born; apostate disciples are as salt that has lost its virtue, and is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men (Matt. 5. 13); there is an obscurity of the soul, wherein the very light is as darkness (Matt. 6. 23); . . . there are offenders for whom it were better that a millstone were hanged about the neck and they were drowned in the depths of the sea (Matt. 18. 6). These are all sayings that are weighted with a burden of prophetic warning. They compel us to recognize with an awe of spirit which is the deeper the more humbly we acknowledge the authority of Jesus, that he believed in an immeasurable danger which threatened the souls of men; a horror of a great darkness from which they had to be delivered."[1]

In the synoptic Gospels the Judgment is represented as taking place "at the consummation of the age" (Matt. 13. 49, R. V., mg.) or at the coming of Christ to establish his kingdom (Matt. 25. 31). In the fourth Gospel, however, emphasis is placed on the judgment as *present.* "He that believeth on him is not

[1] J. H. Leckie: *The World to Come and Final Destiny*, p. 152f.

judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil" (John 3. 18f.). It does not follow from this that the Johannine teaching is incompatible with that of the synoptics. The Final Judgment does but record the judgment which men pass on themselves here and now by their attitude to Christ, as revealed in their character and conduct.

II. The Christian Hope

The New Testament in its teaching as to the Future is mainly concerned with the destiny of the Christian man. What then are the elements in the Christian hope?

1. *Eternal Life in God through Christ.* The Christian believes that life here is a school to fit us for a larger and nobler life hereafter. He has the confident assurance that the moral travail of earth is not for naught; that the good won shall not be buried in the tomb, but that earth's aspirations shall find fulfillment in another sphere of life. Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother and Forerunner, has conquered death, and he is "the first-fruits" (1

Cor. 15. 20). The basal ground of the Christian's confident assurance is his fellowship with God in Jesus Christ. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14. 19). Death can neither injure nor destroy the life that is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3. 3). For this reason death is transfigured for the Christian. Death is robbed of its sting and the grave of its victory. It ceases to have any terrors; it is but the door into the larger life of undimmed fellowship with God—a life of growth and of service. Paul sums up his conception of the future by saying that he has "the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better" (Phil. 1. 23).

There has been a good deal of controversy among theologians as to whether the souls of the righteous pass into an *intermediate state* between death and the Final Judgment or directly into the blessedness of the presence of God. There are suggestions of an intermediate state in our Lord's reference to paradise (Luke 23. 43) and in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16. 19ff.), though the references are only incidental. Lazarus is said to be in "Abraham's bosom," and Dives in Hades (not Gehenna). Lazarus is in a place apart from Dives but not out of his sight. On the other hand there are passages in the

Epistles which suggest that the souls of the righteous pass at death into the immediate presence of God (Phil. 5. 23; 1 Thess. 4. 17; "So shall we ever be with the Lord" is often detached from its context and interpreted in this sense). We are here almost entirely in the regions of speculation, and we can only seek reverently to draw out the corollaries of the things which have been revealed. It is easy to conceive of those who are ripe in Christian character and attainments as passing immediately into the presence of God. But the description does not apply to all Christians, or even to the majority of them, and unless it be supposed that the physical process of death produces an inevitable moral change (and in that case the change could not strictly be described as *moral*), not all Christians can be held to be ready for the blessed life. When we add the further considerations of those who die in infancy, and of those who had no spiritual opportunity, Christian teaching seems to compel us to assume for some, at any rate, an intermediate state between death and judgment.

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, *purgatory* is a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in a state of grace, are not entirely free from

venial faults, and have not been fully punished for their mortal sins. They suffer punishment, but they can be aided by the vows, prayers, satisfactions, and almsgivings of the living, by indulgences, and especially by the sacrifice of the mass. When purified, they pass into heaven.

It should be added, here, that the New Testament does not regard the destiny of the soul merely from the standpoint of the individual. Each soul shapes its own destiny. It is not, however, a solitary destiny that is realized, but life in a community or kingdom. The righteous shall shine forth "in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13. 43); they are to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1. 12).

2. *The Resurrection of the Body.* Christian teaching has always insisted on maintaining the close association of the idea of resurrection with that of immortality. In the Gospels the two ideas are perhaps hardly distinguishable, though it should be noted that our Lord teaches that our physical nature does not pass unaltered into the hereafter (Matt. 22. 30).

In the fourth Gospel the resurrection is represented as a present process which takes place when men come under the power of

Christ who mediates eternal life to them. When Martha says that she knows that Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection at the last day, Jesus replies: "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (11. 24ff.). Again he said, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (5. 25). The resurrection life and eternal life are one and the same thing and are a present possession. The references in this Gospel to "the last day" (6. 40) suggest that while those who "hear the voice of the Son of God" enter into the glorified life here and now, they realize it more completely at the final consummation of all things.

Paul approaches the question in the light of our Lord's resurrection and of his glorified body. It is no disembodied spirit that enters on the immortal life; the human personality survives in its integrity. There is a *resurrection of the body*, but not this body of flesh, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15. 50). God prepares for those who are Christ's a body suitable to the conditions of the future life. "For we know that if the earthly house of our taber-

nacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked" (2 Cor. 5. 1ff.). "If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15. 44). As in the case of Christ, the body that is buried is "sown a natural body" and "raised a spiritual body." It may be that there is a close connection between our natural and spiritual bodies (that the latter are the counterpart of the former) and that we are fashioning our spiritual bodies now according to the measure of the dominance of the Spirit of God in us. In that case the resurrection of the body takes place at the moment of death, when the spiritual body is liberated from "the earthly house of this tabernacle." There is also a passage in the record of our Lord's teaching which points in this direction: "But as touching the dead, that they are raised; have ye not read, . . . I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mark 12. 26). The implication is that the patriarchs have already risen.

The question arises, Who participate in the

resurrection? Is there a general resurrection of good and evil alike? So far as we can judge from the record in the Gospels, our Lord did not speak of the resurrection of any save those whose destiny it is to become "as angels in heaven" (Matt. 22. 29-33), or, as Luke records, who "are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead" (20. 35; cf. 14. 14 where the reference is to the "resurrection of the just"). It would seem, then, according to the synoptists, that our Lord speaks of the resurrection of the righteous only.

The teaching of the fourth Gospel appears to be the same. As we have seen, the resurrection life and eternal life are regarded as identical—the inheritance of those who are in a right relation with Christ, who is "the resurrection and the life."

Paul too seems to confine resurrection to believers. Those who are raised are raised "in incorruption," "in glory," and "in power" (1 Cor. 15. 42). He hopes to "attain unto the resurrection from the dead" through his experience of Christ and "the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3. 10f.).

It does not follow from this that Paul thought that the unrighteous cease to exist

at death (see Acts 24. 15). All that can be safely deduced from his language is that resurrection, which he always regards as resurrection unto life, is an experience which is limited to those who believe in Christ. It may be that "a region not lighted with the light of Christ's presence was not one Paul cared to explore." But this interpretation is not universally accepted. Some scholars hold that the universal Judgment involves the universal resurrection. Between these two views it is not easy to make a dogmatic choice.

The Christian hope relates not merely to the destiny of the individual, but to the triumph of the kingdom of God. For this reason Christian faith has always cherished the hope of—

3. *The Return of Christ.* The hope of the return of Christ resounds throughout the New Testament (Matt. 16. 27; 25. 31; Mark 8. 38; Luke 12. 40; 1 Thess. 4. 13ff.; Phil. 3. 20f.; Rev. 1. 7). Jesus Christ will come again to consummate his kingdom. The New Testament term for this return is *Parousia* (lit. "presence"). The popular expression, "second coming," does not occur in the New Testament. The thought of the Parousia as a definite historical event ending the present age and inaugurating the age to come is undoubt-

edly a prominent element in the teaching of our Lord as recorded in the synoptic Gospels. The Son of man is to judge the world, vindicate righteousness, and consummate his kingdom in a transcendent sphere. How the Parousia is to be visualized, it is impossible to say. When Jesus speaks of coming in power and glory on the clouds of heaven, he is using conventional imagery which has a concrete meaning behind it, but which cannot be translated literally. All that we can say is that the present age will be ended by some mighty manifestation of the personal presence and power of Jesus Christ. But there are some indications that Jesus spoke of his coming as a process as well as an event (Matt. 10. 23). The great movements which are inspired by the living Spirit of Jesus are comings of the Son of man. Jesus urged men to be watchful, not merely that they may be ready if the end should come in their day, but that they may welcome every fresh manifestation of his presence and power in the movements of history (Luke 18. 8). They must realize that the Kingdom comes from above, and not by mere effort and organization (Luke 12. 32).

Perplexity often arises from the fact that our Lord is sometimes recorded as seeming to

predict his early return (Mark. 9. 1), while on other occasions he speaks as though the event lies in the distant future (Mark 13. 10), and, again, definitely disclaims all knowledge of the day of his coming (Mark 13. 32). The passages which speak of his immediate return cannot be explained away. They are the utterances of the faith which foreshortens the future. They witness to our Lord's belief that the mighty power of God is a greater factor in the coming of the Kingdom than the slow processes of education and evolution. Jesus, like every prophet, used language which appeared to foreshorten the time. In certain moods it is impossible for anyone to speak of the glory of the consummated kingdom of God without leaving on the mind of his hearers the impression that it is actually near at hand, knocking at the door. It must be remembered that our Lord taught that the Kingdom in its inward and spiritual sense might there and then be received, and his hearers would not at first easily distinguish between this idea and that of the consummated kingdom. Further, he taught that the coming of the glorious end might be hastened by the response of faith, and this too would have the effect of foreshortening the time. But the evidence, when fairly weighed, does not justify the

assumption that he confidently expected to return speedily or that he intended to teach his disciples to cherish this expectation.

The idea of the Parousia, as a definite, catastrophic, historical event at the end of the age, is little more than suggested in the fourth Gospel. When the Parousia is mentioned the reference usually seems to be to manifestations of the presence and power of Christ in the processes of history. The Parousia in the fourth Gospel is more spiritual than eschatological.

Paul's thought on the Parousia underwent development. In his earlier Epistles (1 Thess. 4. 13; 5. 10; 2 Thess. 1. 7-10; 2. 1-12) he seems to have looked for the early return of his Lord. But in the Epistles of the Imprisonment he does not mention the Parousia (except in Phil. 3. 20 and 4. 5; but cf. 1. 23), but envisages a cosmic process which is to lead up to the consummation of the kingdom of God and of Christ (Col. 1. 10, 12-20). While the thought of the Parousia was one of Paul's ruling ideas, he did not view the hope of its nearness out of perspective. His emphasis was on the certainty of the consummation of the kingdom of Christ rather than on the time of the consummation. He was constrained to work for it, and not merely to

wait for it. He was thus saved from the obsession of a single idea. He hoped that Christ would appear in his lifetime, but his vision comprehended the universe, and he discovered the need of far-reaching moral and spiritual processes to be worked out in history before all things could be summed up in Christ. He therefore exhorted the Thessalonians to go quietly on with their work, even while he told them that the Lord was at hand (1 Thess. 4. 11f.). He himself organized his churches as though he contemplated a long future before the coming of the day of Christ. Doubtless he was inconsistent, but great spiritual geniuses who possess a many-sided vision of the truth are not afraid of inconsistency. Paul knew that faith can hasten historical processes, and his prophetic vision on occasion foreshortened the time.

The hope of the return of Christ has always been a vital element in Christian faith. It creates the assurance that the Son of man commands all history, and that he is guiding the world to a glorious consummation in which good is destined to triumph over evil, through the mighty power and love of God.

III. Theories of Destiny

Christian thought has naturally been much

exercised with the question of the destiny of men after death. The New Testament makes it abundantly clear that those who accept Christ's proffered salvation will enter into a glorious future of eternal fellowship with God of growth and of service. (Matt. 25. 46; John 10. 21; 14. 2f.; Phil. 1. 23; Rev. 22. 1-5). But what of the lot of those who have rejected Christ and his salvation? Christian thought has followed three main lines, each of which claims some warrant in Scripture.

1. *Universalism.* It is held that *finally* (it may be after many ages) evil will be utterly destroyed and that all souls will be reconciled to God. This view has had advocates in the church, at least from the time of Origen, though it has never been counted "orthodox." It is defended on the general ground that God's love will not be wholly victorious and Christ's triumph will not be complete if finally there remain any "lost" souls. Scripture support is sought in such passages as the following, "Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come" (Matt. 12. 32). It is assumed that the implication is that though one particular sin will not be forgiven, all other sins will be forgiven. This, unsatisfactory though it is, is practi-

cally the only passage adduced from the synoptic Gospels in support of the universalist view, and over against it must be set passages which point the other way. Other passages quoted in favor of the view are: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12. 32); "That God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15. 28); "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15. 22); "Through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life" (Rom. 5. 18); "God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11. 32); "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. 2. 10). There is no need to enter into the exegesis of these passages here. It must suffice to say that the interpretation put upon them by universalists is, to say the least, very doubtful.

In fairness it should be stated that this view is not necessarily divorced from a belief in the reality of future punishment. It is possible to hold that the utmost consequences of sin must be paid, and yet to believe that *finally* all men will be reconciled to God. Origen, for example, affirmed that sin leaves indelible marks on the soul, and that consequently sin involves the soul in an eternal

sense of loss. The arguments which tell most strongly in favor of universalism are:

(1) The contention that Christ's victory is incomplete so long as there is in the universe any evil that is unredeemed.

(2) The fact that the race is a unity would seem to imply that the salvation of each is bound up with the salvation of all. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, writing of the men of faith, says, "Apart from us they should not be made perfect" (11. 40). The same principle would seem to apply to all men in relation to their fellows. This argument has special force when we consider those who are bound to one another by ties of love. It would seem to us that their bliss must be imperfect if those whom they love are among the "Lost."

But, on the other side, it may be urged: (1) It is possible that a man may have so yielded to sin as to have become incapable of repentance and of responding to the divine love. Our Lord taught that the sin against the Holy Spirit—the deliberate and persistent choice of evil instead of good—cannot be forgiven. The man who commits this sin cannot be forgiven, because he is incapable of receiving forgiveness. He has said, "Evil, be thou my good," and it may be that character

may become so fixed that repentance is unattainable even in the next world.

(2) To assert that all men must ultimately be saved seems to some to involve a serious interference with human freedom. It is to imply that ultimately all men will be compelled to yield to the power of God. But it may be questioned whether this argument has very much force. To cherish the confident hope that ultimately all men will yield to the persuasive ministries of grace and to the constraint of divine love is not to invoke compulsion. At the same time there is always the danger of surrender to an optimistic fatalism.

(3) One of the commonest objections to universalism is that it cannot be preached without weakening the moral sense. It is urged that if men are told that they will all be ultimately saved, they will be apt to regard sin lightly. This is a very real danger, though it could be mitigated if side by side with the hope of universal restoration the preacher were to proclaim the reality of the future punishment of sin.

(4) The strongest objection against universalism, the one which explains its failure to command the assent of the church, is that it finds such dubious support in Scrip-

ture. The passages quoted, even if they existed alone, are by no means conclusive. But read in connection with other passages, they afford no ground for dogmatism, and at the most do but give some ground for a reverent agnosticism.

2. *Conditional Immortality.* According to this theory man is not naturally immortal. The gift of immortality belongs to those who live in fellowship with Christ. Those who are not Christ's may survive the dissolution of the body, but as their life is not rooted and grounded in God, it has no guarantee of permanence. If they continue in impenitence and reject the divine grace, they are doomed to final annihilation. This view found some support in the Christian Fathers, but was not influential in the shaping of Christian thought. It did not attain prominence until after the Reformation, when it was held by the early Unitarians; and was set forth in the *Racovian Catechism* (1605), the earliest Unitarian Confession. But it is significant that this view has not held its ground among the Unitarian churches. Among its defenders in the nineteenth century were Horace Bushnell, R. W. Dale, and Edward White.

There is little in the synoptic Gospels which can be claimed in support of this view, save

that the Conditionalists are rather apt to regard the terms "life" and "death" as synonymous with "existence" and "nonexistence," and quote such a passage as Matt. 7. 13f. in support of their theory. But it is difficult to believe that the immortality of the soul is not a presupposition of the teaching of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels. A strong case can, at first sight, be made out for Johannine support of the doctrine of conditional immortality, for both the fourth Gospel and the Epistles of John teach that the life which is life indeed is mediated through the Son (John 1. 4; 6. 33-35; 10. 10; 17. 3; 1 John 5. 12). But the distinction drawn is not between immortality and annihilation; it is between eternal life and mere survival. The theory is held to find support in other New Testament writings because of the frequent use of the words "destruction" and "perdition" to describe the lot of the wicked (Rom. 3. 16; 9. 22; 1 Thess. 5. 3; 2 Thess. 1. 9; 2 Pet. 3. 7; Phil. 1. 28; 3. 19). It is a very strained exegesis which gives to these words the meaning of total annihilation, especially when they are viewed in the light of their whole context.

This theory renders a service insofar as it emphasizes the moral quality of the life to come—that eternal life is not merely existence

without end, but life in God. But the objections to the theory outweigh the elements of truth which it expresses.

(1) *It takes away the belief in the natural immortality of the soul.* This is a big price to pay for the logicality and simplicity which the theory offers us. Whether the soul is capable of being destroyed or of destroying itself is a metaphysical question on which we need not enter here. We need only say that if the soul can survive the shock of separation from the body in the hour of physical death, it is hard to conceive that it is liable to another kind of annihilation at a later stage. To conceive of the soul as not naturally immortal is to lower its greatness and its dignity. Moreover, there is much to be said for the objection that this theory denies the unity of the human race. If immortality is conditional and is something to be won, it is not of the essence of human nature. Conditionalism splits up the human race into two species—those who have immortality and those who have not.

(2) The aim of this theory is to do away with an ultimate Dualism, and to foreshadow a universe in which God's love will be triumphant. But the theory does not achieve what it sets out to do. The victory of God's love does not seem to be complete if some of

his children have chosen annihilation rather than reconciliation.

3. *Eternal Punishment.* According to this theory the destiny of every man is fixed at death. The good enter into everlasting life, and the wicked are doomed to everlasting punishment. Although they have not usually been held together, the theory of eternal punishment is compatible with the belief in future probation. The punishment is partly the outworking of sin in character, and in some cases the mental torture of remorse. The most terrible element in it is entire and everlasting separation from God. Some of the older theologians used to teach that there is an element of physical torment in the punishment, but that is a view which finds very little assent to-day. The theory of "eternal punishment" may be called the "orthodox" theory of the church. Though not unchallenged, as we have seen, it was the dominant view among the Fathers of the church. But it is significant that neither the Apostles' Creed nor the Nicene Creed expresses any judgment on this matter. The so-called Athanasian Creed teaches that the wicked suffer everlasting perdition.

The decrees of the Council of Trent speak of "eternal punishment," the *Larger Catechism* of

the Greek Church (1846) of "everlasting fire," and "everlasting torment," and in the main the confessions of the Protestant churches take up the same position. It must be admitted that there are many passages in the New Testament which seem to point clearly in this direction. Passages have already been quoted earlier in this chapter showing how our Lord spoke of a decisive separation of the heirs of the Kingdom from the rest of humanity. Whatever theory be ultimately adopted, full weight must be given to these passages. Then there are those passages in which he uses the Gehenna imagery. "It is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9. 47f.). The language is figurative. It clearly indicates punishment that is terrible, but there is no assertion that it is unending. Because it is said that "the fire is not quenched," it does not follow that a particular individual will continue in the fire forever. Moreover, degrees of guilt and of punishment are recognized. There are to be "many stripes" and "few stripes."

The most important passage is Matt. 25. 31-46. It is said that the wicked "shall go away into eternal punishment: but the right-

eous into eternal life." At first sight this seems conclusive. The meaning, however, does not lie on the surface. Our Lord is describing the coming of the Son of man to inaugurate his kingdom. He is describing the conditions on which men will be admitted into or excluded from the joys of this kingdom. The word which is translated "eternal" does not necessarily mean everlasting. It is true that it is generally used in this sense outside the New Testament. Yet in the Septuagint (The Greek translation of the Old Testament) it is applied to the Aaronic priesthood (Num. 25. 13), the gates of Zion (Psa. 24. 9), and the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16. 34). In a Jewish apocalypse there is a reference to eternal life, which the following sentence defines as lasting five hundred years. In these instances "eternal" evidently means a long period of time. It means enduring for the Age (the Present Age, or the Messianic Age, or the Age to Come). It is impossible to tell whether in this passage our Lord is describing the coming of the Son of man to inaugurate the Messianic Age or the Age to Come. If the former, it does not follow that those who are excluded from the Messianic kingdom are also shut out of the joys of the Age to Come. It may be that the punish-

ment spoken of is remedial. The word which is used for "punishment" sometimes occurs in this sense in the New Testament period. While it cannot be positively affirmed that the word is used with this remedial meaning in this passage, it must be allowed that this meaning cannot be dogmatically ruled out.

Our examination of the utterances of our Lord usually quoted in support of the doctrine of eternal punishment (Matt. 25. 31-46; 5. 29f.; 18. 8f.; Mark 9. 43f.; Luke 16. 19ff.) therefore shakes our confidence as to the truth of the interpretation which has been placed upon them, and justifies us in taking an agnostic position, not as to the reality of future retribution, but as to the extent of its duration. A similar difficulty attaches to the interpretation of the other New Testament writings (2 Thess. 1. 9; Phil. 3. 19; 2 Pet. 3. 1; Jude 6f.; Rev. 21. 8). They have the same apocalyptic background, and we cannot be certain that the language used is intended to indicate finality, though it must be admitted that, as in the case of the Gospels, it may be so.

4. *Conclusion.* Such light as is available on this, mysterious subject is to be found not so much in the interpretation of particular passages, as in the whole teaching of the gospel concerning God.

God is portrayed as "our Father," whose holy love to us is unbounded and unfailing, and who is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3. 9). Such being the case, it is unthinkable that any limit can be placed to the ministries of the grace of God, whether here or hereafter. It may be said with confidence that God's love never ceases "to seek and to save," and that God is ready to redeem a man even from the deepest hell, *if he is capable of responding to the divine love.* The qualification is important. There are in our human nature dread possibilities of hardening. Our Lord taught that persistent rejection of the good may so harden the soul as to incapacitate it for receiving forgiveness. If any are ultimately lost, it will not be through any failure of the love of God, but through their own willful rejection of love and mercy.[1] Further than this we need not go. The New Testament makes it quite clear that sin is followed by terrible retribution in the future life. If we are left in doubt as to the extent

[1] Some of the advocates of the doctrine of eternal punishment believe that the number of the saved will be infinitely greater than that of the "lost." "We have reason to believe that the lost will bear to the saved no greater proportion than the inmates of a prison do to the mass of the community." (Doctor Hodge, quoted by J. S. Banks in *A Manual of Theology*, p. 271.)

of the duration of the punishment, we may be content that the issue is in the hands of One whose righteousness and love are inseparable. Perhaps one of the most illuminating words on this theme in the New Testament is the statement that Judas has gone "to his own place" (Acts 1. 25). Every man goes "to his own place." It is our character and our relationship to God that determine our place in the eternal order.

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